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No. 38.

EARLY PIETY;

OR,

THE HISTORY

OF

MISS DINAH DOUDNEY,

OF PORTSEA, ENGLAND.

My dear Children*—Godly parents are great blessings; and good children are a great comfort to their parents. The Lord gave the woman of Shunem a little boy; "And when the child was grown, it fell on a day that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, *My head, my head!* And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother." It is a good thing for a child to have a kind mother to go to when he is ill.

* The number of children present when this address was delivered, it is thought exceeded *one thousand five hundred.*

"And when he had brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died." You see little children may die as well as grown people, and die very suddenly too. The Lord who gives us our life, has a right to take it away when he pleases. Some children die at five years old; some at six or seven; and some grow up to be men and women; Dinah was nine years of age; this is all as it pleases God. He gives, and he takes away. The Lord afflicted the Shunamite's child with a pain in the head, of which he soon died. His mother was a godly woman, and went to the prophet Elisha in her distress. She thought her child was gone to heaven, and that God knew what was best for her; and therefore she did not murmur at what the Lord had done. When Gehazi the prophet's servant asked her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? she answered, It is well.

Miss Doudney was very ill more than a year before her death. When she was first taken, she thought that she should die very soon. She said one day to her aunt, with whom she resided, (as her own mother was dead,) "When I am dead, I should like Mr. Griffin to preach a sermon to children, to persuade them to love Jesus Christ; to obey their parents; not to tell lies; and tell them to think about dying, and going to heaven. I have been thinking," said she, "what text I should like him to preach from: 2 Kings, 4: 26. You are the Shunamite, Mr. Griffin is the prophet, and I am the Shunamite's child. When I am dead, I dare say you will be grieved, though you need not. The prophet will come to see you; and when he says, How is it with the child? you may say, It is well—I am sure it will then be well with me; for I shall be in heaven, singing the praises of God. You ought to think it well too."

Now, my dear children, I will prove to you that Dinah

did not think and talk about heaven carelessly, as some children do, and that she did not talk about the hope of going to heaven in a light and trifling manner, without knowing what she was talking about. She examined the Bible, and asked a great number of questions of those who she thought could tell her the meaning of the word of God; that she might not be deceived.

It is an awful thing to talk about heaven and never to enjoy it—to hope to go to heaven without knowing why. It is equally sad to hope to go to heaven without having Scriptural reasons for it. Even children, as well as grown people, should strive to be always ready to give a reason of the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear.

1. Dinah's religion *began very early, and lasted till death.* When she was between three and four years of age, her parents observed a remarkable tenderness of conscience. She was very much impressed with the thought, that God always saw all she did, and knew all she thought, and every word she spoke. She was never known to tell a lie; if she did any thing wrong, she never denied it.

Her mother died when she was about five years old. While she lay in her coffin, the servant carried Dinah into the room to see her mother; but the sight so much affected her that she said, "I will never see my mother any more." The next day she was taken into the room again, and, turning her head, she saw her mother. "O, I have told a lie," said she; "I said I will never see my mother any more. O, shall I be forgiven? Will the Lord pardon me?" Her friends endeavored to remove the distress from her mind, by telling her it was not wrong, as she did not mean it, and she did not go into the room of her own will. For many months, she often appeared uneasy about sinning against God in telling this lie. Frequently hanging about her uncle's neck and weeping, she said again and again, "Will the Lord for-

give me? Do you think the Lord will forgive me? Pray to the Lord to forgive me."

After this, for many months, she was observed never to speak positively, and but a very few times during her life. It was her custom to say, I believe so—I think so—I think I will—or, I think I will not.

From the time she was between five and six years of age, she used to take her books up with her at night; and in the morning she taught her younger sister to read, which she did almost all herself. She then read a hymn and sung it, and went to prayer with her sister. Dinah did not only say the prayers she had learned, but used to pray out of her own heart for such things as she thought she and her sister stood in need of. She prayed that God would give her a new heart—that he would pardon her sins, and help her to love and serve Jesus Christ.

Many children, who have godly parents to teach them, think about good things sometimes, and talk about them; but this soon wears off, and they think no more about them. The older they grow, the less they feel concerned about religious things. But it was not so with Dinah; the older she grew, the more she loved Jesus Christ, and prayed that she might serve him.

O what a happy thing it would be, if you, my little boy, and you, my dear little girl, and all you dear children, loved Jesus Christ, and prayed to him, and served him, as Dinah did. Some of you never think about dying, and going to heaven. You are as old as Dinah was, and some of you are older; yet you never prayed in earnest, that the Lord would give you a new heart—that he would forgive your sins, and make you holy children. Naughty children's hearts are like a cage of unclean birds. You would not, surely, like to bring ugly and unclean birds into a room to show your friends, with a cage full of uncleanness. And

do you think the Lord would like to have the souls of children in heaven, without making them clean first? That is an unclean heart which indulges naughty thoughts; out of which come naughty words, and an obstinate temper; which dislikes to read good books, and to pray to God. It was because Dinah thought her heart was in this manner unclean, that she prayed to have a new one; that is, instead of having bad thoughts, to have good ones; instead of having a bad temper, to have a kind, tender, obedient, and loving temper.

Perhaps some of you do pray to have a clean heart and a right spirit, as Dinah did. Well then, my dear children, continue to pray for it. When you ask your kind father for bread, he does not give you a stone; and if you ask him for meat, he does not give you the rod; he gives you such things as you ask for, because he loves you, and knows you want these things. God is a great deal more kind than your father can be, and he has promised to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Jesus Christ loves little children, and says, I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me.

But you, little boy, that told such a wilful lie the other day, if you should be ill and die, what do you think will become of you? and you, little girl there, who stole the little maid's thimble, the other day, and then told a lie to hide the fault, what do you think will become of you? That great boy there, who played truant some time ago, because he would not learn his book, nor say his catechism, and then told his mother he had been to school, what can we think will become of that wicked boy?

And that other great boy, whose father is dead, and he does not love nor obey his mother; instead of going to a place of worship on a Sabbath day, he seeks the company of bad boys, and would rather go to play on a Sunday than

read his Bible. Though he has often made his mother weep, and heard her say, "You will break my heart if you go on in such wicked ways," yet he does not regard the tears, nor feel for the misery of his kind and tender mother. What, my dear children, do you think will become of such an awfully wicked boy as this? O let us all pray that God would turn his wicked and cruel heart.

That great girl there, whose mother is very ill, and she is not willing to wait upon her, stays with other bad girls when she goes on errands; grieves her mother, and makes her illness worse by her ill-temper, indolence, pride, discontent, and impertinent words. She does not love Christ, nor pray to God, and never loves to read her Bible. O naughty and hard-hearted girl! Where do you think she will go when she dies? Remember what one of the hymns says, which Dinah very often sung:

There is, beyond the sky,
A heaven of joy and love;
And holy children, when they die,
Go to that world above.

There is a dreadful hell,
And everlasting pains;
There sinners must with devils dwell,
In darkness, fire, and chains.

2. Dinah's religion was *real, not feigned*. It was not put on for the sake of making people think she was good. Her religion was not only in knowledge, it was the religion of the heart.

She thought much about good things, and talked much about them. She asked a great number of questions about the fall of man; the death of Christ; and the experience of a Christian. She spoke much about the love of Christ, in coming into the world to save sinners. She said, "O

what could induce him to come from heaven, to suffer in his life and death for sinners, and for sinner-me too!" When her aunt was talking to her, once, of the love of Christ, she said, "You have told me more than I ever knew before. Pray tell me more about Jesus Christ. O I wonder all the men and women in the world do not love Jesus Christ!" What hard hearts those children must have who do not love Jesus Christ! He was nailed to the cross, by his hands and feet, that he might bear our sins, and save them that believe in him from everlasting burnings.

3. This dear child was *very much engaged in prayer*. When in family worship, she was, from six years of age, always very attentive, and very serious. She knelt upright; did not put her head in the chair as though she would go to sleep; nor did she look about; but kept her eyes shut, and endeavored to keep her thoughts employed upon the subject her uncle was praying about.

Dinah took great delight in secret prayer. She used to go three or four times a day by herself for prayer, and perhaps oftener; because she always contrived to go when she supposed it would not be known what she went for. Her friends sometimes asked her why she went up stairs by herself so often. Though she did not boast of praying, she was not ashamed of it; but said, "I have been to prayer." Her uncle once said, "I have been listening if I could hear you; but I could not hear you say a word." She replied, "No; that would be like the Pharisees, who pray in the market-places to be seen of men. Jesus Christ says we should pray in secret."

She desired her minister to pray for her, saying, "The prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Very often she would go to prayer with a little brother and sister who were younger than herself; but this would not have been known if they had not told it, she did it so secretly. About

a year and a half before she died, when there was a great alarm of a French invasion, she said, "Well, these are praying times indeed." "Let us," said she to her brother and sister, "go and pray to the Lord." Her aunt could not listen, as she was then busy; but when they came down stairs, she asked her what she had been praying for. She answered, "I have been praying to the Lord to be our defender and deliverer. If the Lord could raise up stripling David to slay Goliath, he can surely raise up men to contend with Bonaparte! He that saved Daniel from the lions' den, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, from being burned in the fiery furnace, can easily find a way to deliver us, if we cry to him. Indeed," continued she, "if God delivered a city by a woman, he could even make such a little creature as I am the means of saving a nation, if he pleased."

Do you, my dear child, ever go by yourself to pray that the Lord would bless you, and teach you by his Spirit to believe in Jesus Christ, and to love him? Some of you never pray, but say bad words and tell lies. Some of you used to say the prayers your mother taught you when you were little; but, now you are grown older, you have left them off: you go to bed at night and rise in the morning without prayer. This makes me fear you are not fit to go to heaven. Remember, you must be born again—must repent of your sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, before you can enter into heaven.

Perhaps your wicked heart may think there is time enough yet for you to think about dying and going to heaven. O, that is a wicked heart indeed that thinks so. Dinah was not ten years of age, and she is dead. A great number of children have died at your age. What an awful thing it will be, if you should die and not love prayer! None ever entered into heaven that did not love prayer. God says

he will pour out his fury upon them that call not upon his name.

4. Dinah *took great delight in reading*. She read a great deal in books that speak of good things. The Bible she loved the most of all books. She always called it, not merely the Bible, but the Holy Bible. Indeed, she was never known to use the word Bible without putting the word Holy to it; though no one in the family used that expression. There were but very few remarkable passages in the Scriptures that she did not remember and know where to find. She frequently sat for hours together with the Bible before her, reading chapter after chapter, and asking the meaning of those who she thought could explain it to her. She frequently gave her own thoughts, which have astonished those who heard her.

The Book of Martyrs employed much of her time. The language and death of those holy men made her wonder at the power of the grace of God. "But," said she, "no wonder they could suffer so much for Christ, considering what he suffered for them. If the Lord was with them, they could easily bear it all; for his presence with the three men in the furnace delivered them from the heat of the flames. Indeed," said she, "I should not wonder if some of the martyrs did not feel more than the three worthies did."

She read a great deal in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, and Mr. Shrubsole's Christian Memoirs. All the principal characters in those excellent books were perfectly familiar to her. Janeway's Token for Children she read with close attention, with much pleasure, and great profit. She pointed out the experience of those children which she thought most resembled her own, and which upon comparison appears evidently so. The Life of Mr. Henry Dorney furnished this dear child with many a rich feast for her

mind. She seems to have received the whole of this excellently experimental book into her understanding and her heart.

But as hymns expressed her feelings better than she could express them, she was very fond of reading, learning, and singing them. She often expressed the deep sense she had of the evil of sin, and of the wonderful mercy of God, by singing or repeating this hymn, especially the first verse:

And are we wretches yet alive,
And do we yet rebel?
'Tis boundless, 'tis amazing love,
That bears us up from hell.

As she was greatly concerned about the state of her soul, she wished very much to know whether she was a real Christian or not; and therefore greatly delighted in the whole of that hymn of Mr. Newton's, the first verse of which she often repeated with great force of expression:

'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I his, or am I not?

The state of her mind seemed to be well expressed in the following hymn, as she often sung it with evident seriousness and pleasure.

Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore,
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, joined with power;
He is able,
He is willing, doubt no more, etc.

How different are some boys and girls from Dinah! They have no love for reading; they will make any excuse to neglect their books; their parents are under the necessity

of forcing them to read; and even then they do not mind what they read. Young Timothy knew the Scriptures from a child. But these wicked children do not wish to know any thing about God, and Jesus Christ, and heaven. O, what a sad thing it is for a child to grow up and not to love the Bible! Jesus Christ wept over Jerusalem, and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" When we think of your wicked tempers, naughty words, and sinful actions, we tremble for you. When it is considered how miserable you will be if you grow up in wickedness; and what a trouble you will be to your parents; and if you die so, how awfully miserable you will be in another world—it is enough to make your parents and ministers weep over you! O that you did weep for yourselves!

5. Miss Doudney was *very fond of going to hear the word of God.* Her illness prevented her going to public worship so often as she wished; but while she was able, she was very glad to go. She rejoiced to hear the sermon to children on Good Friday. She heard it last Good Friday, and when she went home, she related almost the whole in the order it was delivered; saying, "I hope this sermon will make a lasting impression on my mind; it seems as though Mr. Griffin spoke particularly to me." She well understood the meaning of that hymn, and frequently sung it:

Lord, how delightful 'tis to see
A whole assembly worship thee;
At once they sing, at once they pray,
They hear of heaven, and learn the way.

I have been there, and still would go;
'Tis like a little heaven below:
Not all my pleasures and my play,
Shall tempt me to forget that day.

O write upon my mem'ry, Lord,
The texts and doctrines of thy word;
That I may break thy laws no more,
But love thee better than before.

With thoughts of Christ, and things divine,
Fill up this foolish heart of mine;
That, hoping pardon through his blood,
I may lie down and wake with God.

When she was in the house of God, she listened attentively to hear what was said; she did not look about, but kept her eyes fixed on the minister. Once she said, "I have been looking so long at the minister, that my neck aches so I cannot turn my head." Dinah did not smile at other children in the place of worship; nor play with her fan, nor with her gloves, nor turn over the leaves of the books, as some careless children do. When we see children do such things in the house of God, we know they are not attentive to the minister; and this makes us fear that they do not love God. If you do not love the house of God, can you think of going to heaven? None go to heaven but such as love the service of God on earth. They who go there are continually worshipping him and singing his praises. Can you think, my dear children, that a holy God will suffer any to enter into heaven that do not love him, nor love his house, nor love to be with his people? If you do not love the house of God below, you cannot be fit for the house of God above. Dinah delighted in the worship of God in this world; and therefore she hoped to enjoy the worship of God in the upper and better world. She often sung the following verse over and over again:

Then shall I see, and hear, and know,
All I desired or wished below;
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy.

6. Dinah had a *great concern for the happiness of others, and possessed a great esteem for the people of God.* When it was told her that her father was going to marry again, she said, "If it be to one of God's people, I have no objection." When a person died, or was particularly spoken of, she was very desirous to know if he was a godly person. It was a great grief to her to hear one profane the name of God, and she was evidently unhappy in the company of the wicked.

When I asked her why she wished me to preach to children, after her death, she said, "Because I wish other children to think about heaven, to hate sin, and to love Jesus Christ. But particularly I wish you to caution them against disobeying their parents; but that they should do all they can to make them happy." She spoke a great deal to her brothers and sisters, and to her other young relations. The eldest of them says, "I shall never forget it as long as I live." To one of them that she thought needed admonition and reproof, she gave both with great tenderness. "You think I don't love you," said she; "but I do love you well enough to dwell with you in heaven through all eternity." She loved the ministers of Jesus Christ because they taught her the way of salvation, and tried to save men from going to hell. The cruelty of Satan in "trying to pull men down into hell with him" often affected her heart very much, and made her pray "that the kingdom of Christ might speedily come all over the earth." Once she said, "I do love the ministers of Christ, and especially my own minister. I love him as much as I love my brother or my father." The night she died, she said, "I want for nothing but to shake hands once more with my minister, and to kiss my father;" a pleasure which, from the lateness of the night, and her not being considered so near death, she did not enjoy.

7. This dear child, for some considerable time before

she died, *well understood how sinners are to be saved.* She knew her own goodness could not save her, as God's law was holy, and she had broken it. She knew it was through faith in what Christ had done and suffered for sinners she was to be saved. Knowing that the law condemned her, she often spoke of the preciousness of Christ, and the efficacy of his blood, by which she was pardoned and accepted of God. In a new hymn book of Dr. Watts she had folded down the corners of the leaves to eight or nine hymns, in which she principally delighted; entreating they might not be unfolded till after her death. One of these she often repeated and sung, as expressing her sentiments and experience on this subject:

No more, my God, I boast no more
Of all the duties I have done;
I quit the hopes I held before,
To trust the merits of thy Son.

Now, for the love I bear his name,
What was my gain I count my loss;
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to his cross.

Yes, and I must and will esteem
All things but loss, for Jesus' sake;
O may my soul be found in him,
And of his righteousness partake.

The best obedience of my hands
Dares not appear before thy throne;
But faith can answer thy demands,
By pleading what my Lord has done.

8. Dinah was *a very good-tempered, affectionate child, and very obedient to her parents.* Her kind disposition made her beloved by all who knew her. The grace of God teaches those who possess it to be good-tempered. Chil-

dren who find fault and complain, are discontented, often fretful and angry, are not like Jesus Christ. She did not refuse doing what she was desired to do. When she was bid to do any thing, she did not say, Do you do it, Eliza; or, let William do it; but was ready to perform whatever was desired. Her aunt does not remember that she was ever bid to do a thing twice. This was following the example of the Lord Jesus, who said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me."

Dinah did not fret about fine clothes; but thought more about the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which, in the sight of God, is of great price. Nor did she envy other children because they might have gayer clothes than herself. Her thoughts were too much employed about better things, to be improperly concerned about these trifles. She begged that no expensive, fine things might be used at her funeral. Instead of hearse and coaches, she wished that six young men that feared God might carry her to church, and her minister walk before them. But such was the state of the weather, that this request could not be complied with.

She was remarkably industrious. Before she was ill, she would play at innocent amusements with other children: she was taught that this was necessary for the cheerfulness of her spirits, and the health of her body. But she was very careful not to do it at improper times; when it was against the will of her friends, or when she should be at school. When she was not at play, she would not be idle; either work or reading kept her constantly employed. This was doing what is right: children should learn to be industrious, and to store their minds with useful knowledge. This is the way to grow up to be useful and happy. There are many promises to those children who love and obey their parents, and study to make them happy. If their

father and mother die, the Lord will take them up, and be a father to the fatherless; but if they be wicked, disobedient children, God will be very angry with them, and make them suffer for it.

9. Dinah's *death was very happy, and we have no doubt but with her "it is well."*

Some time before she died she had very gloomy apprehensions of the horrors of the grave. She said, "I cannot bear the thought of lying in the cold grave; my mind shudders at it." It was said to her, "You will rise again at the great day." "I know it," said she, "my body and soul will be united again, at the resurrection, yet I cannot get rid of the gloomy thought of the cold grave." However, this did not last very long; after a few weeks' talking, reading, and praying about it, her mind was relieved. She was enabled to think more about the soul than the body. The resurrection of Christ, and the doctrine of the general resurrection, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, freed her mind from distress, and she could think of the grave without being uneasy. She frequently, at this time, sung and meditated on the following verses:

When from the dead he raised his Son,
And called him to the sky,
He gave our souls a lively hope
That they should never die.

What though our inbred sin requires
Our flesh to see the dust;
Yet, as the Lord our Saviour rose,
So all his followers must.

She was at times in considerable distress, doubting whether she should go to heaven when she died; because she was, in her own estimation, so great a sinner. She said,

"If I were quite sure of going to heaven, I should wish to go immediately." Her aunt said, "Why go immediately? is it not that you may be delivered from pain of body?" She paused—and said, "It may be partly so;" but pausing again—she said, "It is not the only reason; I principally wish to go to heaven that I may be happy with God." She often wished to be there, to be free from sin; frequently singing the verses:

But I shall share a glorious part,
When grace hath well refined my heart,
And fresh supplies of joy are shed,
Like holy oil to cheer my head.

Sin, my worst enemy before,
Shall vex my eyes and ears no more:
My inward foes shall all be slain,
Nor Satan break my peace again.

Last Christmas twelve months, being very ill, she thought her death was very near. Her eldest sister having a party of young friends coming to see her at her mother's house, she was asked if she would like to go to Louisa's feast. "I am going to a better feast and to better company," was her answer.

Her relations sometimes thought she was getting better, and might recover. Finding, at one time, she did not talk so much about good things as at some other times, they said, "Dinah, you do not talk of heaven and things of God, as you used to do." She blushed, and said, "I think more than I speak." Her affliction afterwards increasing, and the weather being cold, she could not retire for private prayer as before. This very much grieved her, and made her ask her uncle to pray that the Lord would pardon her neglect of private prayer.

Some time before she died, the doctor intimated she would not live long. A few days after, she said, "The doctor frightened me when he said this would soon terminate in my death." It was said to her, "You are not afraid of death, Dinah?" "No," said she, "I was afraid, but I am not now; the Lord has taken away the fear of death. I believe the Lord is about to take me home soon. I think I shall not live out this week." The night before she died, she thanked her aunt for all her kindness to her in getting so many good things for her, and said, "I am as thankful as though I could have taken them all."

The night before the morning on which she died, was nearly all spent in conversing with her sister and the young woman who sat up with her. She pointed out a number of hymns she wished them to read and sing, and was highly delighted with the following verses:

Jesus, the vision of thy face
Hath overpowering charms;
Scarce shall I feel death's cold embrace,
If Christ be in my arms.

Then while ye hear my heartstrings break,
How sweet my minutes roll;
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
And glory in my soul!

When the word glory was repeated, she broke out as in an ecstasy, "O yes, glory in the soul; I shall soon have glory in my soul!" Soon after, she said, "I am as I never was in all my life." Her countenance appearing considerably affected, as though convulsed, her aunt asked her if she was in much pain; she replied, which were the last words she uttered, "I am quite easy." In a few moments her soul

left this world of sin and affliction to join the church in a state of holiness and happiness in glory.

Now, my dear children, while we are here telling you about Dinah, we hope she is in heaven, enjoying the presence of God. If you could ask the angels, "Is it well with the child?" they would say, "It is well." And if you could ask her, no doubt but she would say, "It is well." O yes, it must be well to be with Jesus Christ, who takes the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom. The body is like our clothes, which we can put off and yet be the same persons. Dinah's soul was herself, and your soul is yourself. Though her body is in the grave, she herself is in heaven. God is in heaven, you know, and it must be well to be where God is. To see God face to face, and to be like him in holiness, must be well indeed. How happy it must be, to be where there is no sin, no night, no cold, no hunger, nor any pain, nor any death! Do you not suppose Dinah must think it well with her, to be able to talk with Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Paul, and the holy angels, and especially with Jesus Christ? You cannot conceive how happy she is in singing the song of Moses and the Lamb, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

Dinah's mother was a godly woman, and we have no doubt but she is gone to heaven. She loved God and prayed in secret, and frequently prayed with another little girl, when she was as young as Dinah. But she grew up to be a good woman, and to be a kind mother of six children. Though she had so many little children, and an affectionate husband, she was willing to die. She said, "I must die, and why not now? for however it may appear to us, God's time is the most convenient." As her death drew near, she appeared nearer in spirit to her God. She

spent much of her time in communion with him. On Thursday evening, March 27, 1799, she hoped to be gone before morning. At six o'clock she said, "I hope I shall be at rest before seven." This was not the case, as she did not take her farewell of these mortal shores until between one and two the next morning. She was quite sensible till the last minute, and truly happy in God. About half an hour before her departure, she said, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." She paused—then said, "Jesus, my Lord, I know his name." Five minutes before she died, she said, "Strike, Lord, I am wholly ready." About three minutes before she breathed her last, she said, "A light, a light!" Her friends bringing a candle, she put it away, saying, "Not that light;" probably implying it was some divine communication to her soul that she meant. Perhaps we shall never know what that light was, till, like her, we come to the confines of immortal glory.

My dear children, don't you think that Dinah's mother, who was so good a woman, would have been very glad, if she had been alive, to have seen her dear child die happy? You cannot think what a pleasure it is to godly parents, when their children die, to see them die in the Lord. But O, what transports of joy must Dinah and her mother have felt, when they met in heaven, to spend an eternity together in the presence of God! There is joy in heaven among the angels of God, when a sinner repenteth. What joy, then, do you think Dinah's mother must feel, to consider that her dying prayers for her children were answered in one of them, and that the first that died entered into glory! May she be the forerunner of all the other children! May the Lord grant your parents may die like her mother; and you all live and die like Dinah!

My dear children, why should you not be as much concerned about the salvation of your soul, as this child was

about hers? Your souls are as valuable to you as Dinah's was to her. What would it profit you, if you could gain the whole world, and lose your soul? or what could you give in exchange for your soul? You may die very young, as well as Dinah; and why then not seek to enter into heaven, as well as other good children?

To love real religion, while you are young, is the way to be happy through life, to have a joyful death, and a glorious eternity. It is the way to make others happy, and to make wise and good men love you. Some of the greatest and holiest men, mentioned in the word of God, were truly godly while they were very young. You have read of the good prince Abijah, in whom there was some good thing found towards the Lord God of Israel while he was very young, even though he lived in a very wicked family. You know that "stripling David" feared and loved God when he was but a youth, and was raised from a shepherd to be a king. Josiah, the king of Israel, before he was sixteen years of age, sought to know the Lord God of his fathers. Samuel and Timothy loved the word and the house of God from their childhood. You have a great many encouragements to seek to know the Lord Jesus Christ, and to love and serve God. Good people love you and pray for you: your minister loves you dearly, and prays earnestly for you; your parents love you, and if they are godly they pray for you; but Jesus Christ loves little children better than any of us.

Now, my dear little children, who were brothers, sisters, and cousins of Dinah, I hope you will long remember what she said to you, and what a good child she was. We have great reason to think she is gone to heaven. Do you think, if you were to die, you should go where Dinah is? Do you think you are fit for heaven? Some of you are older than she was, yet you do not know so much about the

word of God, nor think so much about good things, as she did. What an awful thing it would be, if, when you die, you should not go where she is. How would it pain you to see your dear sister, or cousin, in Abraham's bosom, and you shut out, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Do, my dear young friends, think very seriously of this; and may the Lord cause it to have a lasting impression on your hearts!

That little boy, and that little girl there—one has a little brother, and the other a little sister, gone to heaven; but I am afraid you do not think much about going to heaven. Remember, they that are going to heaven are the best off. If you should believe in Jesus Christ, and love him, you will go to heaven when you die, and then it will be well with you for ever; but if you grow up in wickedness, and die without being made a new creature in Christ Jesus, you will never go where Dinah is, and where the holy angels and good men and women are.

We may see from this child's religious experience and happy death, what the Spirit of God can do upon the hearts even of young children. Out of the mouth of a babe he has perfected praise. Wherever there is a real experience of the love of God, the Holy Spirit is the cause of it, whether it be in a child or a grown person. Surely nothing is too hard for the Lord! He can as easily teach a child as a man. He may have taught this child such blessed things, in order to make some grown people reflect upon their condition. Perhaps there are some present who are men and women, who have been taught by this child what they have not before known. Some are even fathers and mothers, who have never read their Bible so much, nor engaged so often in private prayer as Dinah did, in the short time she lived. What a reproof this is to such persons, that a child, not ten years old, should know more of divine things than

persons who are more than thirty or forty years of age. Is it not to be feared, that what Jesus Christ said of the Queen of Sheba, may be said of Dinah, she shall rise up in judgment against some of this generation and condemn them? O that she and other good children may not rise up in judgment against any of you. There can be no doubt but many children who die in infancy will be happy in heaven; while their parents, through wickedness and unbelief, will be shut out. But O, who can describe the anguish such parents will feel, to see their dear little infants in glory, and themselves the companions of wicked spirits for ever and ever!

Miss Doudney's case shows us what a blessed advantage it is for children to have parents or relatives to teach them the fear of the Lord while they are young, and pray for them and with them. Godly parents may be the means of the salvation of their children. But O, how ought it to pain our hearts that so many dear children have parents who have not the fear of God before their eyes! They know not how to teach their dear offspring the way of salvation. They have never known it themselves. If some of their children were ill, and were as thoughtful about good things as Dinah was, they would not know how to talk to them, nor how to pray for them. O that such parents would but consider their latter end, and the value of the souls of their children!

Dr. Cotton Mather had fifteen children, and lived to see the greatest part of them die in the Lord. When they were capable of understanding him, he would take them alone one by one, and after many affectionate admonitions to the child, he would pray with him, and make him the witness of the agonies and strong cries with which, on his behalf, he addressed the throne of grace. Go, ye fathers and mothers, and do likewise; and the Lord fulfil all your petitions.

A child, eight years of age, once asked his father why he did not pray for him, as some good parents he had read of prayed for their children. The father, looking steadfastly at his dear boy, paused—then sighed—then wept—and, pressing the child to his bosom, said, "No wonder I have not prayed for you, my dear, I have never prayed for myself." "Then I will pray for you, papa," said the child. This was the means of the conversion both of the father and mother. Dear children, ask your parents to pray for you, and with you; and if they will not, then each of you go by yourself, and pray for them.

Ye godly parents and relatives who have been favored with such a blessing from your heavenly Father! a child you dearly loved, blessed with such pleasing evidences of the gracious state of her soul, is now realizing more than has ever entered into your hearts to conceive. Rejoice, and wipe every tear from your eyes. Her light afflictions, which were but for a moment, are now exchanged for an eternal weight of glory. God has done great things for her, whereof you have cause to be glad. May your other children receive a double portion of Dinah's spirit. May other godly parents take encouragement from your mercies, and cry mightily unto God, giving him no rest, till he make their children a praise in the churches. May you, my dear children and young friends, remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Never forget that Jesus Christ said, "I love them that love me; and they that seek me early shall find me." If you seek and find him, then, in all the circumstances of life—in the hour of death—in the day of judgment—and through eternity—you will have to say, with Dinah, IT IS WELL.

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DUTIES OF CHILDREN.

Of all the evils felt by the parent, there is not one which oppresses him more severely than the ingratitude and disobedience of his own children. Bear with us, then, dear children and youth, while we remind you of the duties you owe to your father and your mother: listen to our advice, and pray for the spirit of wisdom, for a childlike disposition, and for the grace of God, to enable you to obey and honor them in a manner consistent with your obligation. Ah, how thoughtless, how depraved, how void of honorable and generous feeling must your minds be, if you can wantonly offend and grieve your parents! Parents to whom you owe so much. You have been always dear to

them; they have tenderly loved you, watched over you by day and by night; sacrificing their ease and their rest to promote your comfort and preserve you from evil. Your lawful wishes have been indulged to the utmost, and your real good has been the subject of their constant and fervent prayers to God; yea, their very life and comfort have been suspended upon yours. And will you, can you forget all the endearing attentions of these kind, and, it may be, too indulgent parents? Can you reward their many labors of love, their incessant and anxious solicitude for you, with nothing but constant ingratitude and disobedience? It is an impeachment of your understanding; it indicates the want of humanity; it is altogether a degrading, odious line of conduct, and is unworthy both of your head and your heart.

The duties which children owe to their parents, form a part of divine truth under every dispensation of mercy given to the church. In the laws delivered by Moses, the Proverbs of Solomon, the Sermons of Christ, and the Epistles which his first ministers wrote to the newly-planted churches, they are frequently introduced to notice. "Honor thy father and thy mother," is not only a distinct branch of the decalogue, but is sanctioned by the following tremendous appointment: "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them; then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him

with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you, and all Israel shall hear, and fear." Deut. 21: 18–21.

Under both Testaments, obedience to parents is enforced upon gracious principles; it is recommended by the mild and endearing persuasions of mercy. When, therefore, the apostle Paul cites the fifth commandment, he does not fail to notice that it is "the first commandment with promise."

But the young reader will ask, "What are the duties which I owe to my parents?" Among the first and most obvious, is a careful and constant endeavor to *avoid whatever has a tendency to grieve them.* Not a look, nor a word, should escape from the child, which will create even a moment's pain; but rather there should be every expression of respect to their authority, and unreserved obedience to their commands. This is not exceeding the rule of Scripture; for it is said in one place, "Children, obey your parents *in all things;* for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord." Col. 3: 20.

Children ought sincerely and tenderly to *love* their parents. This is indeed the first and most needful of all the duties which are denominated *filial.* It is in proportion as this is regular, active, and powerful, that the mind will be suitably affected towards every other duty. If love is either altogether wanting, or is weak and irregular in its exercise, then in all other duties you will be cold, defective, and irregular; yea, it is to be feared, that in motive, manner, and end, you will come short. With love to their parents, children should mingle every sentiment of respect and esteem. So the Israelites were commanded: "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man." Lev. 19: 32. If this conduct was suitable in its

general application, how much more is it so in regard to that constant and becoming respect which a child owes to its aged father and mother. In short, this duty is so clear, so natural, and arises so evidently out of the relation in which you stand as a child, that the slightest, the most casual deviation from it, is not only inexcusable, but highly criminal. Of all the follies and vices to which children are prone, there is none which we ought more pointedly to condemn, or which we should more zealously endeavor to repress, than that of treating age and infirmities with contempt and ridicule. Those parents who have either connived at, or indulged their children in these vicious habits, need not wonder, if in old age they themselves are treated with neglect and indignity by their own children; it is naturally to be expected, and they will then most assuredly read their sin in their punishment.

Children should be assiduous to promote *tranquillity* in the minds of their parents. As they advance in years, it becomes more requisite that they should be serene and composed; they every day become less able to encounter the vexations and perplexities of human life; you should therefore study their peace, and thus help to make the conclusion of their days resemble the calm of a summer's evening. To do this effectually, you must bear with their weakness and infirmities; these increase with old age. Watch opportunities of lessening and alleviating the fatigue and irritation of mind which these naturally promote. If you cannot remove or lighten the evils which are common to old age, yet their only perceiving that you endeavor to do this as much as in you lies, will so please and animate their spirits, as to enable them to bear them with more fortitude and patience; yea, it will excite them to praise God, that

their age and increasing helplessness are so effectually counterbalanced by the kind offices and tender solicitudes of dutiful and affectionate children.

It is the duty of children to *ask counsel* of their parents on all questions in which their own and their parents' interests are in any way involved, especially in what regards business or marriage. Who is so likely to give wise and suitable counsel as affectionate parents? They have had experience, and that is a successful teacher. Their own happiness is involved in yours; who then so likely to advise what is right? Other advisers may be induced to leave your interest and happiness out of the question; they may be tempted to flatter you; they may be influenced by interested motives, or governed by their prejudices and their passions. There is little danger of any of these evils arising out of parental advice. Indeed, the counsel of parents is like that of Rehoboam's old men, wise and temperate, tending to safety, honor, and happiness. The counsel of youthful companions is too often like that of Rehoboam's young men, rash and intemperate, and such as leads to danger, disgrace, and ruin.

It may be, your aged parents are sinking into the grave, surrounded with poverty, and struggling against even want itself, and this in spite of all their industry and frugality. Such a scene would melt the heart of any individual who has a tender and feeling mind. What ought it to do in the bosom of a child? A child, towards whom, it may be, these aged and poverty-stricken parents have manifested such kindness and generosity as ultimately to injure their own circumstances. And will you now hide your eyes from your own flesh? The apostle enjoins it upon the young "to requite their parents." 1 Tim. 5: 4. Joseph, with

the greatest cheerfulness, "nourished his father Jacob," and his brethren.

We know some families, in which the younger branches are living in affluence, if not in extravagance and dissipation, while the aged are disowned and counted as aliens; yea, left perhaps to pine in obscurity and want. Let it not be so with you; let it be your study and delight assiduously to comfort and soothe the minds of your aged parents, esteeming it your honor and happiness to be to them what Boaz proved to the aged Moabitess, "a restorer of life, and a nourisher of old age." Ruth 4: 15. For any thing we know, you may, a few years hence, stand more in need of that tenderness and sympathy yourselves, than any of those towards whom you have an opportunity of exercising them. Be guided, then, by the laws of your divine Master: "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." Luke 6: 31.

Disobedience to parents is a sin of such an odious nature, that the inspired writers have placed those guilty of it in the worst company possible. They are mentioned with *murderers, fornicators, and haters of God.* Rom. 1: 30. They are classed with *blasphemers, traitors, and perjured persons.* 2 Tim. 3: 2. Recollect what must attach to such characters; what must be their portion; ask if you are not in danger of being their companions in misery, as well as in sin: O come out from among them, and be ye separated. Be reconciled to your offended and injured parents. "Be ye reconciled to God." 2 Cor. 5: 20. Express the language and temper of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and also of the jailer, "What shall I do to be saved?"

It is of some importance that you conduct yourself well towards your parents, because this affords a criterion to

your acquaintance, how you are likely to act in other connections, and is, of course, taken into the calculation of your general character. It has often been remarked, that the most dutiful children excel most in all other relative duties. The daughter who has habitually and tenderly loved, and cheerfully obeyed, her father, bids fair to make the most tender, affectionate, and domestic wife. The son who has discovered most anxiety and care to make his mother happy, is most likely to make a kind and affectionate husband. On the other hand, those young persons who are strangers to the sentiments and feelings which even nature should teach, and the Scriptures powerfully enforce, towards parents, are ill-prepared to exercise any of the relative duties, especially those which are peculiar to the conjugal state. In short, that female who is pert, contemptuous, and self-willed, as a daughter, will be still more so as a wife. The boy who is neglectful, morose, and imperious to his father, will be in many degrees worse, in all those respects, as a husband, a father, or a friend. This is a criterion of some weight, and is confirmed by history, observation, and experience.

Another thing which should enforce a steady attention to filial duties, is the effect which a contrary course of conduct is likely to produce upon your own mind, when you arrive at maturity, and when your parents are placed, by death, beyond the reach of either kind or unkind treatment. How pungent the feelings of regret which have through life tormented some children, for their unnatural conduct towards tender and affectionate parents! The celebrated Dr. Johnson confessed to a friend of his at Litchfield, that a breach of his duty to his father lay with much weight upon his conscience for fifty years.

Again, give the measure of respect and obedience to your parents, which you would expect your children to render you if you were a parent yourself. Remember, God is righteous, and he often renders unto men the reward of their sin, even in this life. Has he not said, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again?" Matt. 7 : 2. Many instances have occurred, in which those who have been disobedient to their parents, have been punished in return by the most flagrant instances of disobedience in their children. The page of history furnishes many remarkable anecdotes of this kind: we select one, the case of a father who was dragged by the hair of his head across a room by his unnatural son, to whom he said, "Drag me no further, for exactly to this spot I drew *my* father." How exact, how righteous, how tremendous are the retributions of divine Providence!

Filial duties may be recommended by many pleasing and interesting examples. When Jacob said to Joseph, "Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send thee unto them," Gen. 37 : 13, he might have pleaded in excuse the distance, the danger of the way, and the jealousy and unkindness which his brethren discovered towards him. But nothing of this is to be seen; no cloud appears on his countenance; no muttering proceeds from his lips; but he looks, he thinks, he feels, he acts, like an obedient child, and says, "Here I am;" expressing, in this reply, a prompt, a cheerful compliance with his father's will. Isaac, Samuel, Timothy, and many other venerable names in the Holy Scriptures, might be mentioned as instances of filial piety. Some of the most amiable and celebrated characters of modern times have excelled in this heavenly conduct. Go then, youthful reader, and cherish

the disposition, and walk in the steps of these excellent examples of filial duty.

Attend, ye *female* children, to the examples of female virtue, and of female folly, as exhibited in the page of holy writ; and wherefore are these written, but for your instruction and example? The one to allure you to every thing that is good, and the other to warn you of the danger of either neglecting or acting contrary to the wholesome and godly advice of your Christian parents, whose earnest desire and prayer to God for you is, that you might be saved.

It is hardly possible to relate from the Holy Scriptures a more striking example of filial piety than that of Ruth. She was only daughter-in-law to Naomi, yet how studious to please in all things; how prompt, cheerful, and exact in her obedience to her commands! With what tenderness did she aim to soothe the troubled mind of Naomi, and supply all the chasms made by bereaving providences in her domestic comfort! How minute in performing all the needful offices of kindness, and how diligent to obtain for her a full supply of all her wants! It is impossible but that, by all these tender solicitudes, she must have diminished the bitterness of which Naomi complained, and have smoothed the ruggedness of that path along which she was hastening to the grave. Go then, ye female children, and in the gentleness of your manners, the ardor of your affection, and the sincerity of your submission to your parents, soothe, encourage, and comfort their hearts under the pressure of the many and increasing infirmities of old age; and thereby lend them an additional staff on which to lean, as they totter along the rugged and dreary path of life towards the house appointed for all living.

On the other hand, be warned by the instructive, but

awful example of Dinah, and others, who, by disobeying parental injunctions, disregarding the principles and duties which believing parents had inculcated, and, in spite of the most tender and energetic remonstrances, have associated with the daughters of the land, and thereby miserably wounded the peace of their fond and aged parents, and filled their souls with sorrow, and reaped themselves nothing but shame and remorse. She stole perhaps from under the parental roof, either unperceived, or by some artifice, and would afterwards have justified her absence by some flimsy or false representations. She enters the gay circle with all the delight which the fascinating charms of pleasure afford to the gay and thoughtless heart; but, lo! she returns with the loss of her virtue, her honor, and her peace. Thus dearly do young people sometimes pay for their worldly pleasures, and their contempt of, and disobedience to, parental authority and advice. We might fill a volume with such examples.

But there is an instance of filial affection and duty which must not be omitted, and which exceeds all the examples which can be selected either from sacred or profane history—Jesus himself. He who was the Son of God, the Lord of glory, of him it was said, in regard to his parents, that "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." Luke 2: 51. Yea, one of the last expressions of his attention to the things of this present life, respected the aged, the weeping Mary, who stood by the cross, and sustained the most tremendous shock of which maternal feelings are susceptible, by witnessing the death of her own son. Amidst the variety and pressure of his own sorrows, at the very moment when he is occupied in the redemption of his people, even then he does not for-

get, he does not neglect the duty which he owes to a mother. Solicitous for her ease and comfort, he says to his beloved disciple, "Behold thy mother!" The disciple fully entered into the solicitude of his divine Master, and "took her unto his own house."

If the recital of remarkable instances of filial duty and affection will not allure you to imitate their example, perhaps the recital of instances of a directly opposite kind may produce fear, and deter you from that disobedience which you have hitherto discovered; and which, if longer continued, bids fair very soon to finish the cares and anxieties of your aged and afflicted parents. Sacred history furnishes the young with many awful examples of disobedient children, whose folly and sin involved them in irrevocable disgrace and ruin. The history of the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, and also of the three sons of David, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah, illustrates and confirms this remark. They despised parental instruction and authority, they followed vain and lewd practices, they kept evil and profane company, and by these means they plunged daggers into the bleeding hearts of their parents. In short, of too many disobedient children, it is hardly too much to say, that they are "murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers." 1 Tim. 1: 9. But mark, ye disobedient children, their days were not long in the land of the living; they all came to a miserable end; they fell like untimely fruit. They died without honor, without peace, without the cheering, the well-founded hope of a blissful immortality; they died as every undutiful child may expect to die. Carefully read their history, and take warning by their example. Come to your heart-broken parents with the language of repentance and submission. They stand waiting

with open arms to receive you; and their hearts are yet full of the tenderest emotions of pity towards you. O, let them see the tear of repentance fall from your eyes; let them hear those affecting accents fall from your lips, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight:" they will not only run to meet you, and fall on your neck and embrace you, but the joy of your return shall be to them as life from the dead.

Are Bible precepts, are Bible examples, all lost upon disobedient children? There remains yet one weapon more. We will send you to the unenlightened heathen, to learn the duties which you owe to parents. There may be a few tribes, a few individuals among the heathen, who are so totally void of natural affection, as to leave their aged fathers and mothers to be drowned by a flowing tide, to be devoured by beasts of prey, or to perish through want and neglect; these instances are very few, and they are monsters in human shape. But shall the children of America imitate such a foul example? If, then, Solon pronounces those ignoble and dishonorable who neglect the care of their parents even among heathen, how inexcusable, how criminal must they be, who fall into this sin, surrounded by the light and influence of the glorious Gospel of Jesus! Who can read without admiration, the story of that justly celebrated female Xantippe, who nourished her sick and dying father Cymon, while in prison, with that breast of milk which nature and Providence furnished her for the use of her darling infant? This action was so striking, that it obtained the honorable appellation of *The Roman Charity.* Who can read such peculiar, such devout expressions of filial affection and duty, without approving and admiring them, and secretly wishing to imitate them?

Reader, question yourself as to the manner and spirit in which you have conducted yourself towards your parents. It may be, that you have reason to be deeply humbled on this account. Instead of manifesting every expression of respect, submission, and obedience, have you not gone far into the contrary line of conduct, treating the most sensible and excellent parental advice with contempt? Have you not, with a proud and obstinate spirit, followed your own foolish and wicked inclinations, and by your idle, changeable, and extravagant disposition, wasted that property which your parents procured by industry and frugality? Has not your undutiful conduct in general embittered all their joys, caused many wearisome days and sleepless nights, fixed in their breasts deep anxiety and abiding alarm, as to what might be the final and dreadful issue of these evil courses, and all this at a time when their age and infirmities made an unusual measure of repose necessary; so that their spirits have sunk under the pressure of their woes, their gray hairs have gone to the grave with sorrow, and left you to the bitter reflection, that you have acted the part of a parricide?

If such has been the case, you are indeed an object of great pity. Your guilt is not of an ordinary cast; you have sinned against nature; you have sinned against the law and the Gospel; you have sinned against the most imperious obligations of gratitude: surely, you see the enormity of your crime; surely, you feel how greatly you have offended God! Were it possible for these parents to come back to life, would you not fly to prostrate yourself at their feet, and with shame and contrition implore their forgiveness? Ah! their tender hearts granted you this, before they expired: it may be, you were far from them when they sunk into the arms of death; but they did not, no! they could not

forget you; their dying lips not only uttered the kind accents of pardon to their criminal and undutiful child, but they poured forth on your behalf the most devout and affectionate prayers to God, that his blessing might rest upon you. It may be, you did stand at the death-bed of your departed parents; conscience compelled you to hasten to receive their last blessing. May it also compel you to a constant remembrance of their suitable advice, of their solemn injunctions and exhortations, of their devout and affectionate prayers. May the Spirit of God give efficacy to these, draw you out of the snares of the world, and lead you into the paths of wisdom, whose "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Prov. 3 : 17.

You that are the children of godly parents are under peculiar obligations to the duties which we are recommending. Before you ever saw the light, they felt anxiety for you; from the moment you first breathed the air, they have not ceased to watch over you, and to do you good. They have travailed in birth for your souls incessantly, and earnestly prayed for your present and everlasting happiness; and while doing this, they have shed over you tears of sincere, devout affection; in conversation, in temper, in action, they have instructed, admonished, and entreated you, and shown you the way to heaven. If you wander from the right way, if you go in the way of transgressors, and live and die estranged from the religion in which they have instructed you, nor trust in the God to whom they have most solemnly dedicated you; then, most assuredly, their tears, their prayers, their warnings, and example, will not only reproach you in affliction and death, but will inevitably rise up against you in the last day.

We will cherish a hope, that the disobedient child, after

reading these plain, but friendly admonitions, will say to himself, Verily, I am guilty in this matter. I have been thoughtless in the extreme; I have slighted the most endearing counsels, and the most faithful reproofs. I have studied my own foolish inclinations, and indulged my unruly passions. I have exemplified the character of the young man described by Solomon, Eccles. 11 : 9. I have walked in the ways of my own heart. I have walked in the sight of my eyes, and forgotten that awful truth, that for all these things, God will bring me into judgment. Oh! yes, I have sorely grieved the heart of that father who labored early and late, who ate the bread of carefulness every day to procure for me, his rebellious child, food, raiment, and education; I have deeply wounded the bosom of that fond mother, who with anxious solicitude watched over me by night and by day; who performed a thousand offices of kindness for my sake, and who sacrificed her very health to promote my welfare. Yes, I have multiplied the sorrows of the mother to whom I was under inexpressible obligations —to whom I owed nothing but love, gratitude, and obedience; that mother whose heart yearned over me with such tenderness, and whose affection to me, her ungrateful child, was such, that if it had been possible, she would have imparted to me her own soul. I well remember the tears, the prayers, the entreaties of these fond parents; but, alas! my heart was callous to them all. I loved sin, I was ensnared by evil company. I was intoxicated by the love of pleasure, and an insatiable thirst after public amusements. Now, how readily would I confess to them my errors; with what unfeigned submission would I ask their forgiveness, and implore their blessing; I would, if it were possible, make them ample amends for the injury I have done. I would recall the sighs

I caused them to heave, the tears I forced them to shed, and all the pangs I occasioned them to feel.

But it cannot be, it is too late, they are no more, and I, wretch that I am, helped to hurry them to the grave. I will, however, cherish one hope, which is, that in heaven they feel joy at least over one prodigal, and that prodigal, their once thoughtless and rebellious son. Eternal God! Father of mercies, grant me that grace which shall justify them in saying, "This our son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

How shall the young secure their hearts,
And guard their lives from sin?
Thy word the choicest rules imparts,
To keep the conscience clean.

When once it enters to the mind,
It spreads such light abroad,
The meanest souls instruction find,
And raise their thoughts to God.

'Tis like the sun, a heavenly light,
That guides us all the day;
And through the dangers of the night,
A lamp to lead our way.

Thy word is everlasting truth,
How pure is every page!
That holy book shall guide our youth,
And well support our age. Watts.

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HOW SIN APPEARS IN HEAVEN.

BY EDWARD PAYSON, D. D.

If we would see our sins as they appear to God, that is, as they really are, we must endeavor to look at them as nearly as possible as He views them from his throne. We must place ourselves and our sins in the centre of that circle which is irradiated by the light of his countenance, where all his infinite perfections are clearly displayed, where his awful majesty is seen, where his concentrated glories blaze, and burn, and dazzle, with insufferable brightness. And in order to this, we must, in thought, leave our dark and sinful world, where God is unseen, and almost forgotten, and where, consequently, the evil of sinning against him cannot be fully perceived—and mount up to heaven, the peculiar habitation of his holiness and glory.

Let us then attempt this adventurous flight. Let us follow the path by which our Saviour ascended to heaven, and soar upwards to the palace and the throne of the great King. As we rise, the earth fades from our view; now we leave worlds, and suns, and systems behind us. Now the last star disappears; but a new light now begins to dawn and brighten upon us. It is the light of heaven, which pours a flood of glory from its wide open gates, spreading continual meridian day far and wide through the regions of ethereal space. Passing swiftly onward through this flood of day, the songs of heaven begin to burst upon your ears, and voices of celestial sweetness, yet loud as the sound of many waters and of mighty thunderings, are heard exclaiming, Allelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth! A moment more, and you have passed the gates: you are in the midst of the city, you are before the eternal throne, you are in the immediate presence of God, and all his glories are blazing around you like a consuming fire. Flesh and blood cannot endure it; your bodies dissolve into their original dust, but your immortal souls remain, and stand naked before the great Father of spirits. With a voice which reverberates

through the wide expanse of his dominions, you hear him saying, as the Sovereign and Legislator of the universe, "*Be ye holy; for I, the Lord your God, am holy.*" And you see his throne surrounded, you see heaven filled by those only who perfectly obey this command. You see ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of pure, exalted, glorious intelligences, who reflect his perfect image, and seem to be so many concentrations of wisdom, knowledge, holiness, and love; a fit retinue for the thrice holy Lord of hosts, whose glory they unceasingly proclaim.

And now, if you are willing to see your sins in their true colors, if you would rightly estimate their number, magnitude, and criminality, bring them into this hallowed place, and here, in the midst of this circle of seraphic intelligences, with the infinite God pouring all the light of his countenance round you, review your life, contemplate your offences, and see how they appear. Recollect that the God in whose presence you are, is the Being who forbids sin—the Being, of whose eternal law sin is the transgression, and against whom every sin is committed. Keeping this in mind,

1. Bring forward your *more gross and open sins*, and see how they appear in the light of God's countenance.

Have you been guilty of impious, profane, passionate, or indecent corrupting language? How does such language sound in heaven—in the ears of angels, in the ears of that God who gave us our tongues for noble purposes? Bring forward all the language of this kind which you have ever uttered; see it written as in a book; and while you read it, remember that the eye of God is reading it at the same time. Then say, Is this fit language for an immortal being to utter? Is this fit language for God to hear? Especially, let every one inquire whether he has ever violated the third commandment, by using the *name of God* in a profane or irreverent manner. If he has, let him bring forward his transgressions of this kind, and see how they appear in the light of God's presence. Sinner, this is the Being whose adorable name thou hast profaned, and who, bending upon thee a look of awful displeasure, says, "I will not hold him guiltless that taketh my name in vain." O, what an aspect of shocking, heaven-daring impiety does this sin assume, when thus viewed!

Have you been guilty of *uttering what is untrue?* If so,

bring forward all the falsehoods, all the deceitful expressions which you have ever uttered, and see how they appear in the presence of the God of truth, of that God who has declared that he abhors a lying tongue, and that all liars shall have their portion in the burning lake. O, what is it to stand convicted of falsehood before such a God as this!

Have you been guilty of perjury or *false swearing?* If so, you may here see the awful Being whom you mocked, by calling him to witness the truth of a known, deliberate lie. And how, think you, does such conduct appear in his eyes? How does it now appear in your own? When you took that false oath, you did, in effect, utter a prayer that his vengeance might fall upon you if what you swore was untrue. And will not that vengeance fall upon you? O, be assured that it will, unless deep, timely repentance and faith in Christ prevent. Nor is the guilt of those who share the gain of perjury, and permit such as are employed by them to make use of it, less black and aggravated.

Have you transgressed the command which says, "Remember the *Sabbath day* to keep it holy?" Such transgressions, I am aware, appear very trivial on earth; but do they appear so to Him who gave this command? Do they appear so in heaven, where an everlasting Sabbath is observed? Let those who have been guilty of such transgressions hear a voice from the glory around them, saying, I, to whom you are indebted for all your time, allowed you six days for the performance of your necessary labors, and reserved but one for myself, but one to be employed exclusively in worshipping me, and in working out your own salvation. But even this one day you denied me; when spent in my service, you considered it a weariness, and therefore employed it, either wholly or in part, in serving yourself; thus proving yourself to be wholly unqualified to enjoy an endless Sabbath in my presence.

Have you—we must propose the unpleasant question—been guilty of violating the command which forbids *adultery*, and its kindred vices? If so, bring forward these abominations, and see how they look in heaven, in the presence of the holy angels, in the sight of that thrice holy God who has said, I will be a swift witness against the adulterers, and they shall have their portion in the lake of fire.

Have you been guilty of fraud, injustice, or *dishonesty?*

If so, bring forward your dishonest gains; hold out the hands which are polluted by them, and see how they look in heaven, in the presence of that God who has said, Let no man overreach or defraud his brother in any matter; for the Lord is the avenger of all such.

Have you been guilty of *intemperance*, either in food or drink? If so, look at yourself, and see how a rational being, self-degraded to a level with the beasts, appears in heaven, in the society of pure angelic spirits, in the sight of that God who endued him with intellectual powers, and thus capacitated him for being raised to an equality with the angels.

But these are by no means the only iniquities of which God takes notice; for he has set our *secret* sins, the *sins of our hearts,* in the light of his countenance. Let us then,

2. Bring our *hearts* into heaven, and there, laying them open, see how they appear in that world of unclouded light and unsullied purity.

O, how do they appear! What a disclosure is made when we lay open the human heart, with all its dark recesses, and expose its lurking abominations, not to the light of day, but to the light of heaven! Even in this sinful world, the spectacle which such a disclosure would exhibit could not be borne. The man whose heart should thus be laid open to public view, would be banished from society; nay, he would himself fly from it, overwhelmed with shame and confusion. Of this every man is sensible. Every man is conscious of many thoughts and feelings which he would be ashamed to express to his most intimate friend. Even those profligate, abandoned wretches, who glory in their shame, scarcely dare utter to their equally abandoned associates every thought and feeling which arises within them. And if this is the fact—if the heart, laid open to view, would appear thus black in this dark and sinful world—who can conceive the blackness which it must exhibit, when surrounded by the dazzling whiteness of heaven, and seen in the light of God's presence, the light of his holiness and glory? How do proud, self-exalting thoughts appear, when viewed in the presence of Him before whom all the nations of the earth are less than nothing, and vanity? How do self-will, impatience, and discontent with the allotments of Providence appear, when viewed as exercised before the throne of the

infinite, eternal, universal Sovereign? How do angry, envious, revengeful feelings appear in the eyes of the God of love, and in those regions of love where, since the expulsion of the rebel angels, not one such feeling has ever been exercised? How do wanton, impure thoughts appear?

But we cannot pursue the loathsome, sickening enumeration. Surely, if all the evil thoughts and wrong feelings which have passed in countless numbers through our heart, were poured out in heaven, angels would stand aghast at the sight, and all their benevolence would scarcely prevent them from exclaiming, in holy indignation, Away with him to the abode of his kindred spirits in the abyss! To the omniscient God alone would the sight not be surprising. He knows, and he alone knows, what is in the heart of man; and what he knows of it, he has described in brief, but terribly expressive terms. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their hearts." "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked!" Thus our own hearts must appear even to us, if we view them in the light of God's countenance, and recollect that, in his sight, thoughts and feelings are actions, that a wanton look is adultery, and hatred murder.

3. But let us take a view of our *sins of omission*. These are by far the most numerous, and by no means the least criminal, of which we are guilty. But before we proceed, allow me to remind you once more where you are, and in whose presence you stand. Recollect all you have heard and seen of God's infinite perfections; of the works he has performed; of the blessings he has bestowed upon us. Look at him once more, as he appears in the light of heaven, as he appears in the eyes of the angels and archangels around you, and then say what he deserves from his creatures. Does he not deserve all their admiration, love, reverence, confidence, gratitude, and obedience? O, does he not deserve to be loved, and feared, and served with all the heart and soul, mind and strength? This is what his law requires; and can any requisition be more reasonable? Can we withhold our affections and services from such a Being without great and aggravated guilt? Yet this is the Being from whom we have all withheld our affections and services. Our whole lives present one unbroken series of duties neglected, of favors not acknowledged. And O, how do they

appear, when we review them in the light of God's countenance! When we see before us our Creator, our Preserver, our Benefactor, our Sovereign, and our heavenly Father; when we see in him, to whom all those titles belong, infinite excellence, glory, and beauty; when we see with what profound veneration, with what raptures of holy, grateful affection he is regarded and served by all the bright armies of heaven; and then turn and contemplate our lives, and reflect how they must appear in his sight; can we refrain from exclaiming with Job, "We have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now our eyes see thee; wherefore we abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes? I have sinned; what shall I say unto thee, O thou Preserver of men?" Must not each of us say with the Psalmist, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about; my iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more in number than the hairs of my head; and therefore my heart faileth me?" Nay, more, when you see what God is, and how he is worshipped in heaven, and then look at the coldness, the formality, the want of reverence with which you have often approached him in prayer, and listened to his word, must you not feel conscious that, should he call you into judgment, you could not answer for one in a thousand of the iniquities which have stained your holy things—your religious duties?

But the duties which we owe to God are not the only duties which we are required, and which we have neglected to perform. While his law requires us to love him with all the heart, it also requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves. And this general command virtually includes a great number of subordinate precepts—precepts which prescribe the duties of the various relations that subsist between us and our fellow-creatures. And how far have we obeyed these precepts? How far have we performed the duties which God requires of us, as husbands, as wives, as parents, as children, as masters, as servants, as citizens, and as members of the human family? When we spread our lives before God, and look at them as they appear in the light of his countenance, can we fail to perceive that we have, in all these relations, been grossly deficient; that we have left undone many, very many things, which we ought to have done, and that we are far from having discharged

the duties of a single relation which we sustain? O, how much more might we have done than we actually have done, to promote the temporal and eternal happiness of all with whom we are connected!

Nor do our sins of omission end here. There is another Being, whom we are under infinite obligations to love, and praise, and serve with supreme affection. This Being is the Lord Jesus Christ, our only Redeemer and Saviour. We are required, and sacredly bound to feel, that we are not our own, but his; to prefer him to every earthly object, to rely upon him with implicit confidence; to live, not to ourselves, but to him, and to honor him even as we honor the Father. Every moment, then, in which we neglected to obey these commands, we were guilty of a new sin of omission. Nor have we the smallest excuse for neglecting to obey these commands; for he is most worthy of all which they require. Even the angels, for whom he never died, regard him as worthy to receive every thing which creatures can give. Much more, then, may it be expected that we, for whom he has done and suffered so much, should regard and treat him as worthy. But how grossly have we failed in performing this part of our duty! How must the manner in which we have treated his beloved Son appear in the sight of God? How does it appear to us, when we contemplate him as he appears in heaven; when we see the place he there fills; when we recollect that in him all the fulness of the Godhead dwells, and that to him are unceasingly ascribed wisdom, and strength, and blessing, and honor, and glory, and power?

Before I lay down my pen, permit me to ask whether you cannot now perceive the reason why your sins appear more numerous and criminal in the sight of God than they do in your own? Are you not convinced that they are far more numerous and aggravated than you had supposed? If not, you have not seen your sins in the light of God's countenance; for had you seen them in that light, they would have appeared, in some measure, to you, as they appear to God himself. Witness, for instance, the effect which a view of God's glory produced upon the prophet Isaiah. Though he was an eminently good man, yet when he saw Jehovah seated upon his eternal throne, and heard the surrounding seraphim exclaiming, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory,—he cried out in amaze-

ment, Woe is me! for I am undone; I am a man of unclean lips. In a similar manner would you have been affected, had you seen even but a glimpse of those glories which we have vainly attempted to exhibit. Can you not easily conceive that this would have been the case? Can you not conceive that, were you really placed in heaven, before the throne of God, with all the light of his glory shining around you, all the majesty of his countenance beaming upon you, every glance of his omniscient eye piercing your heart—your sins would appear to you far more black and numerous than they now do? If so, allow me to remind you that a day is approaching, in which you will be constrained to see your sins as they appear in the light of God's countenance. When that day arrives, his eternal Son, the appointed Judge, will be seen coming in the clouds of heaven with all his Father's glories blazing around him, and all the bright armies of heaven following in his train. Seated on a throne of resplendent whiteness, with a countenance from which the heavens and the earth will flee away, he will summon the whole race of men before him, and there cause their lives to pass in review, expose all their secret sins, lay open the inmost recesses of their hearts; while the flood of pure celestial light which pours itself around, will, by contrast, cause their blackness to appear seven-fold more black. Then all disputes respecting the depravity of mankind and the demerit of sin, will be ended for ever. Then no more complaints of the strictness of God's law, or of the severity of the punishment which it denounces upon transgressors, will be heard; for every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world stand guilty before God. But a conviction of sinfulness and guilt will then come too late; for there is no available repentance beyond the grave. He that is found a sinner at the judgment-day, will continue a sinner, and be treated as a sinner, for ever. O then, dear reader, hasten to Jesus Christ, the atoning sacrifice for sin. He alone can cleanse you. Commit your soul to him by a living faith, and through his righteousness you shall stand accepted in the day of his appearing.

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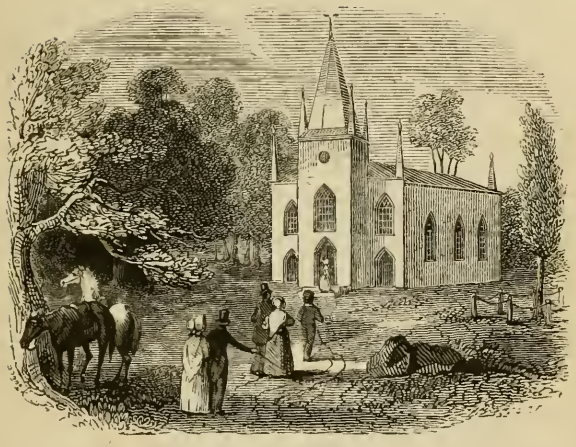
No. 41.

A PERSUASIVE

TO

PUBLIC WORSHIP.

BY REV. GEORGE BURDER.



That the public worship of Almighty God is habitually neglected by a great number of those who "profess and call themselves Christians," is a fact too obvious to need proof. The churches, in some places, are nearly deserted; while the fields, the roads, and the public-houses, are crowded. It is a reasonable calculation, that in some considerable towns, at least half of the inhabitants absent themselves from the house of God. How awful is the idea, that supposing a town to contain twenty thousand people, no less than ten thousand of them live in the neglect of their duty. But, surely, "these things ought not so to be."

Is it not reasonable that we should worship God? In him we "live, and move, and have our being." And is it not right and becoming that we acknowledge our dependence? Is God the only King and Governor to whom no homage should be paid? As man is a social being, and disposed to unite with his fellow-men for civil purposes, it seems agreeable to reason and the nature of man, that human creatures should associate together in the service of God, to confess their sins, to implore his mercy, to obtain his grace, and to praise him for the blessings already received.

This has been the general practice of the worshippers of the true God, in all nations of the world, and in every age of it. We read of Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam, appearing before God, and, probably, at the head of their families, with their different offerings. In early days, every father of a family acted as its priest. The history of the Bible, which is the oldest in the world, fully shows that Noah, Abraham, Joshua, and all the ancient worthies, thus worshipped the God of their fathers. And when a great part of the world had corrupted themselves by idolatry, God was pleased to restore the true worship by a revelation of his will to Moses. A variety of regulations were ordained by God himself, and for many ages observed by the Jews. The divine presence and glory were frequently manifested as tokens of his approbation; and when, at any time, they neglected his service, terrible calamities befell them, as marks of his displeasure.

Our Saviour himself frequented public worship, in the temple and other places. He gave directions for the right performance of it, "in spirit and in truth." He plainly intimates, in the Lord's prayer, that we should pray *with* and *for* others, by teaching us to say, "*Our* Father"—"Give *us* our daily bread"—"Forgive *us* our trespasses," etc. Jesus Christ, having finished the work he came to perform, ascended up into heaven, but promised shortly to send down his Holy Spirit. While the disciples waited for this gift, "they continued daily, with one accord, in prayer and supplication." It was when they were thus employed that the Holy Ghost descended, and by his heavenly influence enabled them to preach "Christ crucified" to the multitude, with amazing success. The first Christian converts abounded in the acts of public worship—"they continued daily,

with one accord, in the temple." In early times they certainly met together by daybreak on the Lord's day, to sing praises to Christ as their God and Saviour. The Lord's Supper was administered very frequently; and the history of the church shows, that, from that time to this, the public worship of God has always been attended by the great body of professed Christians of all denominations. It is, therefore, a new thing, that those who bear that sacred name should desert the house of God.

Public worship is strongly recommended by the many great advantages derived from it. Hereby a friendly intercourse is maintained between the different ranks of society. These are too apt to dislike each other; and their different situations keep them at a distance; but in the house of God, "the rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all." By uniting in the same expressions of humility, prayer, praise, and attention, a union of spirit and interest is promoted; they learn to care for each other; "to bear one another's burdens, and to fulfil the law of Christ."

Nor is it an advantage of small importance to the lower ranks of mankind, that the habit of attending public worship, and a laudable desire to appear with decency before others, excite diligence, produce cleanliness, and are consequently conducive to health; while it is too obvious, that the slothful man, who disregards the Sabbath and the worship of God, often neglects the care of his person, and is covered with filth and rags.

Morality is also promoted by public worship. The services of God's house have a direct tendency to produce and increase that "fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom." Persons do not usually proceed to extreme lengths in open iniquity, who meet every week to confess their past sins, to pray for mercy, and to hear from the pulpit the commandments, threatenings, and promises of God. Look around you, and you will observe that atrocious and desperate sinners usually abandon the worship of God altogether; for, according to an old saying, "Praying will make a man leave off sinning, or sinning will make a man leave off praying."

Divine worship is well calculated to prevent an excessive love of the world. People who are busily employed all

the week in worldly affairs, find their hearts too prone to "cleave to the dust." It is therefore of great use to be directed, on the Lord's day, to the great objects of faith; to be reminded of the vanity of the world, the uncertainty of life, the approach of death; and to have our views extended towards the eternal world, and the different states in which saints and sinners will ere long be for ever fixed.

But the greatest advantage of public worship is, that thereby we obtain a knowledge of "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." Jesus Christ, the great Head of the church, has commanded that his Gospel should be preached to every creature; and a command to preach it, certainly includes a command to hear it. The Gospel signifies *good news*, "glad tidings of great joy, to all people;" namely, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Gospel is a proclamation of God's mercy, through Christ, to sinners ready to perish. "Therein the righteousness of God, by faith, is revealed to faith;" even that righteousness which Christ wrought out by his obedience and death: a righteousness such as the law demands; such as we are destitute of; but such a one as we must have, or perish. This righteousness is held forth to sinners; and becomes the righteousness of every one who sees his need of it, and is enabled to trust in it for his own acceptance with God.

The same Jesus, who commanded this Gospel to be preached, has promised to be with those who preach it, to the end of the world. He has also declared, that wherever two or three meet in his name, he will be in the midst of them. These promises should induce us all to be diligent hearers of the word. Our Saviour has said, "Blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it." Paul says, "It is the power of God unto salvation;" it is the grand instrument which God has appointed, and which he blesses, for the purpose of regeneration, or making us new creatures. Hereby the ignorant become "wise unto salvation." Hereby sinners are brought to repentance. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" and it is by faith that the heart is purified, the conscience cleansed, affliction softened, and holiness promoted.

These are some of the great advantages which attend

the worship of God. What an enemy, then, to himself, is that person who wilfully and habitually neglects the service of God, and thereby renounces them all—and for what? What equal advantages can be proposed? Is a walk, or a ride in the country, or a visit to a friend, or any amusement whatever, of equal value? Certainly not. These are short-lived pleasures at best; but the blessings derived from the service of God are solid, spiritual, and everlasting. It is thus that the soul is formed for the worship of God above, and prepared to join the general assembly of the church triumphant.

These arguments seem of sufficient weight to convince any man who believes the Scriptures, that the public worship of God is a "reasonable service." How is it, then, that thousands in this Christian country dare to live in the neglect of it? Those who reflect upon it, must certainly form some excuses, which appear plausible to themselves, and serve to still their consciences. But it is highly probable that the greater part of those who neglect this duty, never reflect upon the subject; but give themselves up to a careless, thoughtless temper. Such, however, would do well to consider their ways. Man is a rational being; and it is his duty to consider his relation to his Creator, the duty he owes him, and his own personal safety, in reference to the eternal world whither he is hastening. If, indeed, any have drunk the deadly poison of infidelity, we need not wonder at their defection, nor that "they set their mouth against the heavens, and defy the Holy One of Israel;" but it may be charitably hoped that their number is comparatively small, and that the greater part rather *forget* God than *defy* him; that they deceive themselves by vain excuses, which, upon reflection, they may be willing to lay aside. Indeed, the infidelity of some ought to be an argument with others to confess Christ crucified before men. Now is the time for us to show "who is on the Lord's side;" nor can they be thought his friends, who are unwilling to avow it, by uniting in his public service.

Having, then, your hearts disposed by inward and private worship and communion with God, neglect not the assembling of yourselves in the outward temple of the Lord's house. "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise." Mingle your prayers

and praises with your assembled brethren. The devout flame will thus be kindled from heart to heart. By a more than human sympathy, each will assist his fellow-worshippers. Each will offer up his incense from the golden censer in his own heart; whilst the whole ascends in one fragrant cloud to the throne of grace, and is returned upon the humble worshippers in showers of divine benignity and love. Whenever you are about to enter the temple of the Lord, pause a moment at the threshold. Consider that the Lord is in his holy temple. Reflect upon your numberless wants, weaknesses, and imperfections, and your own absolute inability to supply or relieve them. Leave all earthly cares and anxieties behind you. Bring nothing, but a sense of your sins, and an earnest desire of being relieved from the guilt and dominion of them. If, during the service, some ray of divine light should dart into your breast, some touch of divine love should deeply affect your heart, keep silence before the Lord. Whilst he is speaking to your hearts, improve the blessed moment of sweet communion, and you will then taste and see how gracious the Lord is, and, from your own happy experience, be enabled to declare, that it is good for you to be there.

It may be proper here to consider some of those objections which are frequently urged by way of excuse for neglecting the public worship of God.

One says, "*I can serve God just as well at home by reading a good book, as if I went to church.*" It is to be feared, that many who make this objection do not employ much of their time in reading, especially in reading religious books. That some parts of the Sabbath should be spent in reading and retirement, is certainly right, and very commendable; but one duty is not to displace another. We have already seen that Christ has appointed public worship; and if you are a Christian, you must obey his laws. It is not for you to set up your private opinion against the authority of heaven. To despise the ministers and ordinances of God, is to despise him; and no pretence of serving him as well another way, will be admitted. If you carefully examine your own heart, you will probably find that it is sinful sloth, prejudice, and self-conceit, that keep you away.

Another objector cries, "*I do not see that people who go to church so much, are any better than their neighbors.*" If

they are not, it is their own fault; for they have better means of improvement, and ought to excel. "But who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth." Perhaps he might be much worse, if he did not go to church; and probably you would be much better if you did—for you will surely admit that there is room for amendment. But your neighbor's conduct is not the rule of your duty. Leave him to God, while you obey the divine command.

Another absents himself, *because he does not like the preacher: his voice, his manner, or his conduct offends.* You would do well seriously to consider, how far your dislike of the minister is well founded. Perhaps you never prayed for him in your life; how then could you expect to profit by his ministry? But if you have sufficient reason to dislike his doctrine because it is unscriptural, or his life, because it is immoral, you are at liberty to attend elsewhere. "Take heed" what, and "how you hear." "Prove all things," and "hold fast that which is good."

Mean apparel is an objection of thousands more. The poor are ashamed to appear among their well-dressed neighbors. But remember, "the Lord seeth not as man seeth; man looketh at the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh at the heart." If you "worship him in spirit and in truth," your service will not be less acceptable because of your mean attire. The poor man may be clean, and then no one will despise him whose opinion is worth minding. Wait then upon God. It is his blessing that maketh rich; he can prosper the work of your hands, enable you to procure the comforts of life, or raise up charitable friends to assist you; and nothing is more likely to procure them, than your steady and serious attention to public worship. Good men will observe, pity, and help you.

Too many plead the incumbrances of *young children* as an excuse; and many poor women are not at church for years together. But scarcely any ought to be wholly hindered by a family. The father, or an elder child, where no servant is kept, should stay at home by turns; or neighbors might do this friendly office for one another occasionally. Some contrivances of this kind will be made, if there is an inclination: for *other* purposes they *are* made.

But, indeed, *the want of inclination* is the greatest hin-

drance of all, and the true objection of most. But what does this discover? It shows the want of the fear and love of God. It shows the power of a carnal mind, "alienated from the life of God." It proves a person to be in a state of nature, and a child of wrath. "O, consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver!"

Take in good part these plain hints, these faithful cautions, dictated by a sincere desire to promote your present and eternal welfare. Duty to God, your own best interest, the influence of example, and the good of your country, all invite you to the house of God. Delay no longer, and however long you may have neglected his service, and forsaken your own mercies, *let the very next Sabbath find you in a Christian assembly.* May God incline your heart to his service, which is perfect freedom! May his churches be crowded with sincere worshippers; may they echo with his praises; may they resound with the glad tidings of salvation; and thus may thousands be made "joyful in his house for ever!" And O, that every reader may sincerely add, *Amen and Amen.*

How pleasant, how divinely fair,
O Lord of Hosts, thy dwellings are!
With long desire my spirit faints
To meet th' assemblies of thy saints.

My flesh would rest in thine abode,
My panting heart cries out for God;
My God, my King, why should I be
So far from all my joys and thee?

Blest are the souls who find a place
Within the temple of thy grace;
There they behold thy gentler rays,
And seek thy face, and learn thy praise.

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No. 42.

THE

SIN OF FALSEHOOD.

Dare to be true—nothing can need a lie;
The fault that needs it most, grows two thereby.

HERBERT.

When Pompey, the Roman general, was desired not to set sail in a tempest that would hazard his life, he replied, "It is necessary for me to sail, but it is not necessary for me to live." Surely, it becomes a Christian, with equal magnanimity, to say, "I *must* speak truth, and I can leave the event with the God of truth."

How amiable is the character of Verus! By a long course of integrity, and an invariable adherence to truth, he has so established his reputation, that his word is relied on equally with his bond; and all who know him, take pleasure in dealing with him. When he sells, he never unjustly commends his own goods; and when he buys, he scorns to depreciate the value of another's. His promises are always made with caution, and fulfilled with punctuality; and if he is called by duty to make oath before a magistrate, he never equivocates nor prevaricates, but regards it as a most sacred obligation. As he abhors falsehood himself, he never countenances it in his servants, or his children; nor will he suffer the fashionable vice of denying that any of his family are at home, because it may be inconvenient to be seen. This consistency of conduct has gained him the entire confidence of all who know him, and a peace and serenity within his own bosom still more valuable.

On the other hand, MENDAX verifies the saying, "The bread of deceit is sweet to man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel." Prov. 20 : 17. He is in perpetual anxiety of mind; his imagination is ever on the rack to invent new falsehoods, that he may conceal former ones; his memory not being competent to the recollection of all his deceptions, his folly is continually exposed to those with whom he stands connected, and his character is so completely ruined, that he cannot be believed even when he speaks the truth. In short, he is a torment to himself, an object of contempt to others, and an abomination to the Lord; while they that deal truly are his delight. "The lip of truth shall be established for ever; but a lying tongue is but for a moment." Prov. 12 : 19.

Though the man who uses falsehood should escape detection from his fellow-creatures, yet how will he stand before the all-seeing God, who knows our secret thoughts, and whose "judgments are true and righteous altogether?" Psalm 19 : 9. God has marked the sin of lying with the strongest terms of reprobation, and couples those who are guilty of it with the most notorious of sinners. The law is made for murderers, for *liars*, for perjured persons. 1 Tim. 1 : 10. "All *liars* shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." Rev. 21 : 8. There shall in no wise enter the heavenly city "any thing that defileth, or *maketh a lie*." Rev. 21 : 27. The Lord hateth a lying tongue. Prov. 6 : 16, 17, 19. "He that speaketh lies shall perish." Prov. 19 : 5, 9. He has given us on record some awful manifestations of his wrath against it, particularly in the instances of Ananias and Sapphira, who were instantly struck with death, though they appear to have told part of the truth, in saying they had sold the land for so much, when in fact they had sold it for more; a conduct which many deem sufficiently correct, who seem to study how far they may swerve from the direct line of truth with-

out saying what is absolutely contrary to it; but God has commanded us to walk, not on the *edge*, but "in the midst of the paths of judgment;" and has marked the contrary conduct, in the above, as well as in other instances, with severe, but just punishment. See Acts, chap. v.

But some may object, that lies are necessary in their business, and that without the use of them their families must starve. Let such remember, that the same God, who strictly enjoins us to speak the truth, has done it not only for his own glory, but for our happiness; and has given ample promises of all needful things to those who put their trust in him. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." Psalm 37 : 5. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things; but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Matt. 6 : 32, 33. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Tim. 4 : 8. And he has said, "A poor man is better than a liar. The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death." Prov. 19 : 22, and 21 : 6.

The plea which is made by many, that they never lie to the injury of others, will not avail at the bar of a just God; as the breach of a known law is a direct impeachment of the wisdom of the law-giver, and leaves the liar without excuse, even though his lies be told in jest, Matt. 12 : 36, 37; a practice which should be utterly avoided; since, with this sin, as with all other sins, the beginning may appear small, but when once committed, it gathers strength by every repetition, and unless stopped by divine grace, will end in our utter destruction.

It would be a concern of less moment, were the practice of lying confined to those who are pursuing no higher objects than the things of the present evil world; but the

professors of Christianity are apt to fall into this sin by using strong expressions of obligation, or of friendship, where only common gratitude or civility is intended—unfounded excuses, or evasive answers, to cover some neglect or imprudence, or from a fear lest the men of the world should suspect that they are religious. By such conduct they give great occasion to the enemies of the cross to blaspheme, while they behold this gross inconsistency in their walk, who profess to be followers of that holy Jesus, in whose mouth guile was never found, and who is himself emphatically styled, THE TRUTH. John 14 : 6.

If we would preserve veracity, we should be persuaded in our own minds, that *no circumstance whatever can make a lie lawful.* We should accustom ourselves to a sober, modest way of speaking, and avoid all those modes of speech that border upon falsehood. Some persons affect to be certain of every thing they speak, and pronounce all that they say with the highest assurance ; but those who frequently assert doubtful matters with such a positive air, prove that they have not so much tenderness of conscience, and such a religious fear of lying, as a Christian ought to have. Others are always endeavoring to surprise the company with strange things and prodigies, and all this out of the vanity of their hearts, seeking applause and admiration. This sort of affectation often betrays a person into falsehood, and insensibly allures him to say things that are neither true nor credible. Some persons, when they discourse of common things, always speak in strong and superlative language, such as *prodigious*, *incomparable*, *infinite*, by which they commonly exceed the bounds of truth, as well as render themselves ridiculous in the eyes of every person of sense.

And not only when we relate matters of fact, but when we express our sentiments of the characters of men, let us be just to the truth. Brotherly love generally requires us, in speaking of a blemished character, to use the softest terms

the matter will bear, and silence often becomes us best; but no pretences of love or charity are sufficient to excuse us, if we speak a falsehood. Again, in speaking of a bright character, or paying civilities to others, let us not be lavish beyond the truth. Sins of complaisance may be applauded by men under the name of goodbreeding; but the ear of God takes a just and strict notice of the softest and smoothest falsehoods.

We should be especially careful how we repeat what we have heard, lest we inadvertently exaggerate; a practice which is sometimes attended with serious consequences, especially if our neighbor's character be concerned.

As a further means of preserving veracity, we should guard against the violence of our passions; for this will much endanger the veracity of our lips. Passion will carry our judgment beyond the truth, and thus lead us to extravagance of language, even contrary to the present judgment of the mind.

We should consider to whom the practice of lying assimilates us. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do; he abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it." John 8: 44. He tempted our first parents by asserting a direct lie, persuading them that God had not spoken the truth, but would be less severe in the punishment of sin than his words declared: an insinuation which he persists in to this day, with a fatal influence over the minds of all who have not the fear of God in their hearts. It is among the earliest manifestations of that depravity which we all inherit from the first Adam, that children, as soon as they attain the use of speech, "go astray, speaking lies," Psalm 58: 3; and as they advance in life, it becomes in a lesser or greater degree habitual, except the Lord, in sovereign mercy, shine into their hearts by the renewing influences

of the Holy Spirit, which is the only effectual remedy against this, or any other sin. He is the Spirit of truth, whose office it is to guide into all truth; and he is promised, as a free gift, to them that ask him: "A *new heart* also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." Ezek. 36: 26–28.

When the heart is thus renewed, the man sees an importance in truth to which he was before a stranger; he loves truth in every view of it. The Scriptures, which are the word of truth, become his delight, and as God's law is the truth, he brings his heart and conduct to the test of it, which induces him, who hitherto thought himself righteous, to "loathe himself in his own sight for his iniquities." Thus he "knows the truth, and the truth makes him free" from the bondage of sin; he being enabled to believe the record that God has given of his Son, who, when we were liable to just condemnation, took upon him our nature, and submitted to the death of the cross, to "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Heb. 9: 26.

The Lord sanctifies the believer through the truth, and he becomes, in a measure, assimilated to God. As the Lord desireth truth in the inward parts, so the renewed man delights in it from the heart: he chooses the way of truth; the law of truth is in his mouth. He walks with God in peace and equity, and finds his truth a defence against every spiritual enemy; and though, by the influence of Satan or the world, he sometimes falls, he repents of his sin, with a genuine desire to forsake it; and having "an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," he is humbled at the throne of grace, under the burden of remaining depravity; and finding the promise realized, that "they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength," he goes forth with fresh vigor to the warfare, till he becomes more than conqueror, through Christ that loved him; and obtains, by faith,

a glorious prospect of life and immortal bliss, in that heavenly state where nothing false can enter, but all will be truth, harmony, and love.

Reader! are you a *parent*, or the head of a family? Urge upon your children and servants the necessity and advantage of speaking the truth at all times; and having made it the subject of prayer in your retirement, lead them to the throne of grace, for that strength which alone can make them firm in the cause of truth; and as their souls are intrusted to your care, we entreat you to *watch* over them with a tender solicitude. Be especially careful lest they find in your conduct any example of swerving from truth, even in trivial things, as example is universally found to be more prevalent than precept.

Children! our dear young friends, we pray you to consider how much you would sin, were you to give way to the temptation to tell lies, as you see many children do; for though you may deceive your parents or teachers, you cannot hide any thing from God, who sees and knows all things; and if you live and die in the love of lying, or any other sin, he will surely punish you for ever in hell. Young as you are, you may die before you are one day older; but you are not too young to pray, and God loves to hear children pray. Call earnestly upon him to pardon you, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who is the Saviour of sinners, and who has said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Ask him for grace, that you may always hate lying, and watch against it; and that you may speak the truth during the remainder of your life.

Servants! let not the desire of concealing any thing from your master or mistress induce you to fall into the sin of lying; for whenever you do, it is increasing the fault, by adding another to it; venture, therefore, upon no practice that needs a disguise, or an excuse; and then you will not

be so often under the temptation to speak falsehood. It will have a great tendency to establish your character as good servants, if you are never known to tell a lie; and whatever may be the character of your superiors, they will be much better pleased with the open confession of a fault, than if you attempt to cover it by denial. You should also recollect that your very thoughts are known to your Master who is in heaven, and that you must one day render an account to him.

Before his righteous tribunal we must all appear, "that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." 2 Cor. 5: 10. Let us therefore study to fill our respective stations with faithfulness to the trust he has committed to us, "as they that must give account, that we may do it with joy, and not with grief." Heb. 13: 17.

Let those who bear the Christian name,
Their holy vows fulfil;
The saints, the followers of the Lamb,
Are men of honor still.

They hate the appearance of a lie,
In all the shapes it wears;
They love the truth; and when they die,
Eternal life is theirs.

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No. 43.

SLEEPING IN CHURCH.

WHY PEOPLE SLEEP DURING PUBLIC WORSHIP ON THE SABBATH.

1. They have served themselves and the world too faithfully during the week. Nature cannot bear every thing. It cannot usually bear more than six days' labor in a week. And where people do seven days' work in six days, nature cries out for help. She becomes exhausted, and wants repose. Multitudes, in anticipation of the Sabbath, weary themselves out on Saturday by doing nearly two days' work in one day. And no wonder they are drowsy on the Sabbath.

2. They do not take sufficient time for sleep on Saturday night. They reserve their lawsuits, their shopping, and their extra affairs for Saturday afternoon. Thus, in addition to being unusually fatigued, they are up till 11 or 12 o'clock, or later, that evening. The natural consequence is, they are sleepy on the Sabbath.

3. They *think* that they cannot help sleeping in church. They look upon their sleepy disposition as an infirmity. Thinking that they cannot help it, they do not try to help it.

4. They take too easy a posture. Some people take care to place themselves in a comfortable position to sleep in. They brace themselves in a corner of the pew, so that they need not fall, or make too low bows, while they are sleeping. Others use for a pillow their arm, or a book, or the top of the slip before them, or a post, or the shoulder of

another. Thus they show that *they expect to sleep.* And they generally succeed.

5. They do not interest themselves in the religious exercises of the occasion. If they cared enough about the preaching to follow the train of remark, they would feel no disposition to sleep.

IT IS IMPROPER AND WICKED TO SLEEP IN CHURCH.

1. Because it shows great disrespect to God. Those who go there, go professedly to *worship*, not to mock, God. When men go to pay their respects to their superiors, do they get to sleep in their company? When Esther went into the presence of Ahasuerus to present an important petition, did she fall asleep? If she had fallen asleep, do you think the king would have said to her, "What is thy petition, and what is thy request; it shall be granted, to the half of my kingdom?" And when men come into the *audience-chamber* of the King of kings, professedly to present their petitions and show their respects, how does He look upon their falling asleep? And how contemptuous and disrespectful does it appear in the sight of God, to see guilty men, to whom his authorized ambassadors are delivering his message, getting to sleep under the sound of the ambassador's voice!

2. It shows disrespect to the place of worship. Jacob exclaims, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Who could sleep in such a place? *House of God!* House dedicated to his service. Not a dormitory—a house to sleep in; but a sacred place—a temple—a house in which to worship the true Jehovah—the antechamber of heaven. Yes, *the gate of heaven*, through which devout worshippers enter heaven to breathe its life-giving atmosphere, and to feast

upon its sacred delights. Here true Christians "come to mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," and here they meet "an innumerable company of angels, and the general assembly and church of the first-born, and God the Judge of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." And can any one treat such a place with so much disrespect as to sleep there! O, tell it not.

3. It shows great disrespect for the minister. Christ told his ministers, "He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." And how can men more clearly show that they despise the minister than by going to sleep under his preaching?

4. It shows disrespect for the audience. Would it not be so esteemed on other occasions?

5. It shows disregard for religion. Religion is the business which calls men to the Lord's house. To sleep when this business is transacting, is evincing a great unconcern about it, or disregard of it.

6. It shows a very great disrespect for one's self. If a man had much respect for himself, would he be caught in such an awkward predicament, in such a place, and on such an occasion, and in such company?

7. It sets a bad example. This is self-evident.

8. It is presenting the body a *dead* sacrifice to God.

9. It is offering a vain oblation.

10. It is offering the sacrifice of fools.

CONSEQUENCES OF SLEEPING IN CHURCH.

1. Those who do it lose their time and labor in coming to church—pity to do so much for nothing. If sleep is their object, they can get that without so much trouble.

2. They exert a bad influence on others. Sleeping in

meeting is contagious. Where one sleeps, many learn how, and soon catch the disorder. Thus some pews, or corners of the church, might appropriately be called the *sleepy pews*, or the *sleepy corner*.

3. It forms or strengthens a bad habit. The oftener one permits himself to sleep in time of public worship, the more is he disposed to sleep. So that this habit, like every other bad one, strengthens by indulgence.

4. It disheartens the minister. After he has labored hard during the week to prepare to give to each of his hearers a portion in due season, to see them have so little appetite for the food which he has made ready, as to fall asleep while he is dispensing it to them, is truly discouraging. He is ready to ask, What, can ye not watch one hour in a whole week? So short a time to be together to worship God and prepare for heaven, and that short time be slept away!

5. Sleepers disturb the devotions of others. This they do by their indecorous appearance, or by their loud breathing.

6. They give others a bad impression respecting their religious character.

7. They endanger their souls by insulting God, for he will not be mocked.

Remark. No sleeping in eternity, and all who are going there should be watchful here.

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No. 44.

"GIVE ME THY HEART."

BY REV. DANIEL DANA, D. D.

MY SON, GIVE ME THY HEART.—PROV. 23:26.

Solomon, the wise and magnificent king of Israel, arrayed in royal robes, and dispensing justice from the throne, is an interesting object of attention. Nor does he appear less engaging, or less venerable, when, descending from the throne, and losing the monarch in the man, he exercises the office of a spiritual instructor and guide. Are not our reverence and affection even increased, when we see him become the monitor of children and youth, and vent the fulness of a father's heart in exhorting them to be wise, and to be happy?

But *behold, a greater than Solomon is here!* It is not merely an affectionate *human* parent, claiming the love and obedience of a dear son. Solomon speaks, not so much in his own name, as in the name of the King of kings—the glorious Jehovah. It is He, the king and venerable Father of the great family of man, who here addresses every individual of his rational human offspring, in language such as this: "Ye creatures of my power; ye children of my family; objects of my constant care and compassion; remember your Creator, your Father, and your God. Expand your souls to the Supreme Good. Let your best and

purest affections be mine. Choose me as your portion. Love me as your Friend. Delight in me as your happiness. Reverence my authority; adore my wisdom; trust my grace; lean upon my arm; resign yourselves, your all, to my service and disposal. And you especially, the younger members of my family, just rising into existence, *give me your hearts*. To your kind Parent, and your guardian God, devote the flower and prime of your affections, and your earliest obedience. In the fair morning of life choose my service as your business, and the enjoyment of me as your bliss." Such is the tender and gracious exhortation of the blessed God: an exhortation which most powerfully addresses the reason, the conscience, and the sensibilities of every human being.

But the present design is, to bring it home, if possible, to the bosoms of the young. Let us then, after stating a few arguments which illustrate the *general* obligation of giving the heart to God, subjoin some considerations which press the duty with peculiar force on youth.

The obligations which bind every human being to give the heart to God, are numerous and infinitely strong. Among the variety of arguments which the subject presents, let the following receive a serious attention.

1. The Being who requires of us all, that we give him our supreme affections, is in himself infinitely *worthy* of them. If power and majesty fill us with reverence; if purity, justice, and truth, engage our esteem and admiration; if goodness and compassion attract our love; has not the glorious JEHOVAH, who possesses all these attributes in perfection, the strongest possible claims that we should revere and adore him, that we should admire and love him,

with our whole heart? And does it not betray an awful perversity of taste and feeling, that we should often be so strongly attracted by some faint shadows of excellence in creatures, and at the same time be so cold and dead to the real and transcendent loveliness of the Creator? This leads us to observe,

2. The relation in which God stands to us as our *Creator*, presents us an obvious and commanding motive to give him our hearts. At his command, we rose from our primitive nothing to existence. He has given us bodies, curiously and wonderfully made; admirably furnished with various limbs and organs, all adapted to some important use. He has given us souls of still more curious and admirable construction; souls, which are capable of knowing, loving, and enjoying their Creator; souls, which shall survive their frail tenements; yea, which shall survive the wrecks of time and the dissolution of nature, and run parallel, in duration, with the everlasting God himself.

3. The blessed God is also our most gracious *Preserver* and *Benefactor;* and, on this account, he most justly claims our warmest and best affections. He has supported and protected us ever since we have been in existence. He constantly follows us with more than a father's tenderness and compassion. He feeds and clothes us; he guides and guards us. He saves us from innumerable dangers, seen and unseen; and when the shafts of death are constantly flying around us, his all-gracious hand turns them aside from our bosoms. Who of us can name the day, the hour, the moment, in which he has not been sustained by the arm of God, shielded by his providence, and fostered by his bounty?

His mercies are far more numerous than our moments.

They are greater even than our sins. For oh, what amazing obstacles of disobedience and rebellion have been triumphed over in their display! And can we withhold our hearts from such a Preserver and Benefactor as this? Shall the numberless and constantly repeated blessings, which he showers down upon us, leave us still unpenetrated, unmelted, insensible, unthankful? Shall our lives, spared by his patience and comforted by his love, be filled with nothing but disobedience, neglect, and rebellion against him? Bear witness, heaven and earth, what horrid, what unnatural ingratitude is this! But,

4. The catalogue of mercy is not yet closed. Its crowning act is yet untold. Think of the glorious Jehovah as looking down upon a guilty and rebellious race, with the tenderest benevolence and pity. Think of him as not sparing his OWN SON, his ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON, that he *might* spare, and bless, and save lost, perishing, hell-deserving sinners. Think, oh, think of the love of Jesus! "Should all the love," says one, "of all the men that ever were, or shall be on the earth, and all the love of the angels in heaven, be united in one heart, it would be but a *cold* heart, to that which was pierced with a soldier's spear." Think of that crucified Redeemer, with all the inestimable blessings which his blood has purchased, as freely offered to you. Think of him as kindly knocking at the door of your hearts; as tenderly pleading for admission; as presenting before you pardon, peace with God, and life immortal, upon the easiest possible terms. Yea, think of him as earnestly inviting and entreating you, by all his humiliations, toils, and sufferings, by all his tears and blood, that you would open your hearts to him, and be his, and be happy forever.

Can you remain unaffected by such astonishing consider-

ations as these? Do these mysteries of mercy, which fill angelic minds with wonder; which resound, and will forever resound, through the celestial arches, awaken no lively sentiments in your breasts? Can you trifle with the condescensions of God, and with the dying agonies of Jesus? While viewing his cross, do you not feel your inmost hearts melted with godly sorrow, and fired with humble, grateful love? Are you not irresistibly constrained to yield up your bodies and spirits, all you have, and all you are, to your redeeming God? Then stand astonished at your own depravity and hardness. Never, never more lay claim to gratitude, to sensibility, to any of the tender or generous emotions of the human soul.

5. God is *the only adequate object* of our affections; and therefore we are under obligations to devote them entirely to him. How poor and sordid are all the objects and enjoyments of the world! How incapable of satisfying the vast desires of an immortal mind! Say, ye who wear away your lives in pursuing the wealth, the pleasures, or the distinctions of the world, and are often flushed with the hope of finding happiness in these things, are you not as often disappointed? Do you not find, amid them all, a void in your breasts, which they are wholly incompetent to fill? Does not something within you continually whisper that happiness is not to be found here? Even amid your short intervals of delusive enjoyment, are you not often haunted by the reflection, that you must soon bid an eternal adieu to these objects of your idolatry? Does not the idea that you must shortly be separated from all which your hearts hold dear, and come into the presence of your Judge, frequently gnaw, like a worm, at the root of all your happiness?

Even the pleasures of *friendship*, which are among the

sweetest and noblest of the present life, are in many respects unsatisfying. We are apt to expect in a friend a perfection of which human nature is, in its present state, incapable. Hence ensues bitter disappointment, whenever the pleasing illusion vanishes. Often are our just and reasonable expectations concerning a friend cruelly defeated. We find, to our inexpressible mortification, that our affections have been fixed on an unworthy object. Or if the object of our attachment is all we wish, how short the period of enjoyment. Soon, perhaps in an unexpected hour, will the messenger of death, impartial and inexorable, snatch them from our pained bosoms, or us from theirs. O, how strongly do all these considerations urge us to give our hearts to that condescending and glorious FRIEND, of whom we cannot possibly form too high an idea; who will never disappoint, but far exceed our most exalted apprehensions; who, as our acquaintance with him increases, will constantly manifest new beauties of character, new tokens of kindness; a Friend from whom (O, delightful thought!) we can never be separated; and who, at the hour of death, will receive us to an intimacy unspeakably more endearing and blissful than we have ever known before.

6. The heart is what God *requires* and will *accept*. His language to every son and daughter of the human family is this: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God *with all thy heart*." This is his first, his chief, his indispensable command. Outward homage, the mere *form* of obedience, however fair, cannot please the God of heaven. He requires the *heart*—the *whole* heart. He will be satisfied with nothing less. And he has repeatedly assured us that the sincere and humble homage of the heart is pleasing and acceptable in his sight. What an animating consideration!

Will the all-glorious Jehovah, the supreme Lord of earth and heaven, take a gracious notice of worms of the dust? Will He, whom myriads of spotless seraphs profoundly and unceasingly adore, condescend to look from his celestial throne, and invite the children of the fallen human family to give him their hearts? Will he deign to assure them that this will be an acceptable tribute; that he will think himself honored by it; and still more, that he will graciously reward them with a share in his kindest friendship and love? The condescension is wonderful indeed! Where, in the whole compass of human thought, can there be found considerations more calculated to operate upon every ingenuous mind? What arguments can possibly be conceived more powerful to persuade us, as rational beings, to give our hearts to God?

But we are to consider this great and comprehensive duty in its peculiar reference to the young. The tender appellation, "My son," which introduces the inspired passage at the head of this address, and which occurs so often in the Proverbs of Solomon, clearly intimates that the writer had a very particular regard to youth. He was anxious that they, more especially, should, without a moment's delay, give their hearts to God, and enjoy the blessedness of religion. Doubtless he had a lively view of the snares, temptations, and perils, so peculiarly incident to their period of life, and so pressingly urging them to take shelter under the Almighty wing. Perhaps, too, the tenderness and susceptibility of their age inspired a pleasing hope, that the counsels and exhortations which might be lost on those more advanced in life, might, with *them*, meet with attention, and with success.

Come, then, beloved youth, listen to an affectionate and inspired Monitor. Attend to the counsels of heavenly wisdom, and heavenly love. Seriously ponder some of those numberless arguments, which invite and urge you to give your hearts to God.

1. Consider, that God himself enjoins this on *you, very particularly and expressly*. He enjoins it with all the authority of a Sovereign, and all the tenderness of a Father. How solemn and affectionate the command, "Remember now thy Creator, in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, in which thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." "Come, ye children," says David, speaking in the name, and by the authority of God, "hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord." And what a melting exhortation does the Holy Spirit put into the mouth of the same venerable man, when, bowing under the weight of years, he was just about to resign his throne and crown! "And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever." Similar exhortations are found scattered, in great numbers, throughout the whole Scripture. Since, then, God has been pleased so frequently and expressly to enjoin it on the young to devote themselves to his fear and service without delay, their obligations to do this must be peculiar; and peculiar their guilt, if they refuse. If they would not treat infinite excellence with disregard, and infinite authority with contempt, they must devote to their God their first years; the fresh, unwasted vigor of their faculties and their affections.

2. God has frequently signified, in his word, that youth-

ful religion is *peculiarly pleasing and acceptable to him.* "I love them that love me," says the divine Redeemer; "and those that seek me early shall find me." What a gracious notice did he take, in the days of his flesh, even of young children, when he said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." How kindly did he receive to his arms those little ones which were brought to him, and lay his hands on them, and bless them!

These, and other passages of similar aspect, show that the blessed God takes a peculiar pleasure in the religion of youth, and of children; that he smiles, with singular complacency, on their early dedication to him; and that he is ready to assist, with his gracious influence, their first serious attempts in his service. Surely, these are animating and inspiring thoughts. Has the glorious God condescended to give such a kind encouragement to the young to seek him without delay—to give him their hearts without reserve? Their language then should be, "Thy face, Lord, will we seek. To thee will we unreservedly devote our hearts, ourselves, our all." They should earnestly implore the Father of mercies, that he would take entire possession of their hearts, form them by his grace, and fill them with his love.

3. God is infinitely *deserving of our earliest affection and obedience.* Since he is a Being transcendently glorious and amiable, he indispensably claims our supreme, our earliest, and our constant regard. There is no moment of our existence, in which we are not bound by the strongest obligations to love him with all our hearts. Why then should the payment of that tribute, which is every moment due, be for a single moment delayed? What can be more natural, than

for the child to fly to the arms of his parent, and repose on his bosom all his tenderest thoughts and affections? And should not the offspring of the God of heaven, every moment watched by his care, and nourished by his bounty, devote to their heavenly Parent and Benefactor the fair morning of their existence—their earliest love, and earliest obedience? His adorable perfections, and the relations which they bear to him, render him infinitely worthy of this tribute. And every moment they withhold it, they rob the supreme Jehovah of his due. They practically deny that he has any property in them—any sovereignty over them.

4. In youth, the *affections are warm and tender*. The mind is peculiarly susceptible of impressions; and the heart is powerfully attracted to those objects which appear sublime, beautiful, and lovely. How melancholy, that at this golden period it should entertain no lively sense of the excellence of the blessed God; that it should feel no ardent desires and aspirations after the SUPREME BEAUTY, and the SUPREME GOOD! O, my young friends! can you be content to pursue the objects and enjoyments of the world with such a lively relish; and yet have no warm and vigorous affections to give to your God? Can you feel yourselves captivated by human, fading charms; and yet be insensible to the transcendent excellence of the Being of beings? Shall the kindness of an earthly friend attract and rivet your gratitude; and can you treat the bleeding love of JESUS with thankless indifference? Cold and insensible indeed is that heart, which is a stranger to religion. It is lost to the best feelings, the sweetest and the noblest sensibilities, which can possess the human bosom.

5. It is much to be feared that those who pass over the season of youth without religion, will be *strangers to it for*

ever. We would not limit the grace of heaven. Nor would we drive the aged sinner to despair. He is in the hand of God; and with God, nothing is impossible. Yet the melancholy apprehension just suggested, is but too well confirmed by the ordinary course of the divine dealings with mankind. Indeed, it perfectly corresponds with the nature of the case. The period of youth is most exempt from worldly cares, anxieties, and engagements. It affords, of course, the best opportunities for giving a vigorous and undistracted attention to the things of religion, and for devoting all the ardor and energy of the soul to the love and service of God. But when persons have once plunged into the solicitudes and employments of the world, they have ordinarily little time or thought to bestow upon the *one thing needful.* And too often is it the case, that if it have been neglected till this anxious and busy period, it is neglected to the last.

Besides, the longer persons have lived destitute of serious religion, the more disagreeable and difficult it becomes of course. In youth, the conscience is comparatively tender, and alive to the discharge of its office. The heart is then more susceptible of serious impressions. And there is reason to believe that the monitions of the Holy Spirit are ordinarily more frequent and powerful. But a long continuance in sin naturally hardens the heart. It stupefies the conscience, and renders its reproofs and remonstrances more feeble, and more unfrequent. God has said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man:"—an awfully alarming declaration! Woe to the man, the woman, the child, from whom the Spirit of God, long resisted and provoked, has finally withdrawn! Hence ensues, in a fearful degree, that hardness of heart, that blindness of mind, and insensibility

of conscience, which are but the too certain indications of approaching destruction.

6. All opportunities for attending to religion, besides the present, are *totally uncertain*. Nothing is more common than procrastination in this great concern; yet nothing is more dangerous; nothing more frequently fatal. That "convenient season" never present, yet ever in imagination near, has lured thousands on to their eternal ruin. The young are but too generally prone to expect a long life, and to flatter themselves that they will have sufficient opportunity to secure religion hereafter, though the present should be neglected. Vain flatteries! Delusive expectations, often! For how often has the giddy, unprepared youth been summoned into eternity, just as he was laying the deepest plans, and indulging the fondest expectations of worldly happiness! O, the unutterable folly, guilt, and wretchedness of such a case! Be warned, then, ye careless youth, who have hitherto neglected religion, and neglect it no longer. As you value your immortal souls, as you would not pluck down ruin on your heads, procrastinate no farther the all-important business.

> "Youth is not rich in time; it may be poor.
> Part with it as with money; sparing, pay
> No moment, but in purchase of its worth;
> And what its worth, ask *death-beds*—they can tell."

7. Let the infinite, indescribable *blessedness* of religion, recommend it to your immediate choice. Think what it is to come to God as a Friend and a Father; to receive his blessing; to be admitted to a place in his family, and in his heart. Think what is *his* happiness, whose sins are pardoned; whose conscience is at peace: who possesses

"What nothing earthly gives, or can destroy,
The soul's calm sunshine, and the heart-felt joy."

Think of that sublime communion with heaven, which is the privilege of every real Christian—a communion in which he finds, not merely a pledge, but a prelibation of immortal glory. Think what sources of consolation are his, who has Omnipotence for his guard, infinite wisdom for his guide, boundless mercy for his support, and the unfailing inheritance of heaven for his portion. In a word, think of that hour at which nature recoils, and which so often appalls the heart of the stoutest and most abandoned sinner; and think what it is to enjoy, in that hour, a sweet peace, a holy calm and fortitude of soul; perhaps a humble joy and triumph. Surely such, and such alone, are truly blessed. It is here that real happiness is found; and not in those wretched and transitory objects for which the multitude sigh. And will you shrink from this happiness? Will you thrust it from you, when offered, and mercifully pressed on your acceptance? Can you bear the thought of continuing uninterested in such blessings for a single moment? Above all, can you bear to hazard for a single moment their *everlasting* loss?

8. Remember, my dear youth, that it is not your own happiness alone which is concerned, but the happiness of *many around you;* perhaps of thousands and millions yet unborn.

Need you be reminded of the tender anxieties of your parents on your behalf? Need you be told how much, how very much of their comfort depends on you? Probably you may be instrumental, either to impart joy to their dying pillow, or to bring down their gray hairs with sorrow to the

grave. But look into a wider sphere. Should you rise into life destitute of the fear of God, you will be incumbrances on society, and too probably its pests and corrupters. Your evil example may ruin others. You may be the unhappy instruments of leading thousands down, with yourselves, to the regions of endless despair. The thought is full of insupportable horror.

Think, on the other hand, how great must be your honor and happiness, to rise up, and be blessings to all around you; ornaments to society; pillars in the Church of God; instruments of preserving and perpetuating, in a thankless world, the name and religion of Jesus; of diffusing the saving light of his Gospel among thousands and millions whom you will never see. Do not these sublime objects penetrate and rouse your inmost souls? Do not your youthful bosoms burn with a generous ambition thus to approve yourselves the friends of God and man—the benefactors of the present, and of future ages?

And now, beloved youth, suffer me to ask you one serious, all-interesting question. Have you ever *given your hearts to the blessed God?* Have you ever devoted to that Being, who is transcendently glorious in himself, and who has been to you the best of fathers and of friends, your tenderest and most exalted affections? If you have not; if, to this moment, you have never felt one sentiment of genuine love to the God who made you; if, in refusing him your hearts, you have refused him every thing which he will accept; if your lives, which have been so crowded with the evidences of his compassion and care, have been spent in a series of disobedience and rebellion against him; O, how shall I address you? Must not your own hearts condemn you? Must not the very thought of such unnat-

ural, aggravated guilt, fill you with horror? Say, is not that Being worthy of your best affections whom all the angels in heaven adore—the Being who called you into existence, and holds you in life; the Being from whose kind hand comes every blessing you have, or hope for—the Being who, notwithstanding all your ingratitude and disobedience, bears with you with astonishing patience, permits you to walk his earth, and breathe his air?—nay, more, who incessantly guards you by night and day, and visits you every moment with numberless blessings?—nay, more than *this*, the Being who has given his own beloved SON to die for rebel men; and who, through him, offers pardon, peace, life, and immortal glory, to the very chief of sinners? O, think how unnatural, how monstrous it is, to treat with disregard and neglect such a being as this!

Think, too, how wretched must be your condition, while you continue in this state of mind. Such a temper must pollute and poison every source of enjoyment. And how miserable must you be in the season of affliction, if you have no refuge in God—no heart to come like children, and pour out your sorrows at the throne of grace. And, alas! what preparation have you to die? Where, if this hateful disposition remains unsubdued, must you spend your eternity? Where, but in the company of those rebellious and miserable spirits in whose guilt you have participated?

Reflect, at the same time, on the infinite and innumerable obligations which bind you to make an immediate, an entire, and everlasting surrender of yourselves to the ever-blessed Jehovah. Stand astonished at that long-suffering mercy of his, which waits, even now, to receive, to bless, to save you for ever. Let that mercy melt your hard hearts, and irresistibly reclaim you from all your guilty wanderings.

Return, ye prodigals, to your Father's house. His arms are open, his heart is open to receive you. Are you guilty? He will pardon you. Are you naked? He will clothe you. Are you polluted? He will cleanse you. He will bless you in time; he will sustain you in death; and in the regions above, he will give you to inherit joys, large as your desires, and immortal as your souls.

Among the deepest shades of night
Can there be one who sees my way?
Yes; God is like a shining light,
That turns the darkness into day.

When every eye around me sleeps,
May I not sin without control?
No; for a constant watch he keeps
On every thought of every soul.

If I could find some cave unknown,
Where human feet have never trod,
Yet there I could not be alone;
On every side there would be GOD.

He smiles in heaven; he frowns in hell;
He fills the air, the earth, the sea:
I *must* within his presence dwell;
I *cannot* from his anger flee.

Yet I may flee—He shows me where;
Tells me to Jesus Christ to fly:
And while he sees me weeping there,
There 's only mercy in his eye.

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THE

CHRISTIAN ATONEMENT.

It is now more than eighteen hundred years since Jesus of Nazareth appeared among the Jews in the land of Judea. The character of this remarkable person was altogether singular; such as never, since the fall of man, had been exhibited on earth. It was not, like that of the best of men, a mixture of good and evil. It was perfect innocence—unspotted purity. "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." His bitterest enemies—for he had many, who hated him without a cause—could never convict him of sin:—the judge, while he gave him up to the sufferings which their malice panted to inflict, pronounced him guiltless, and washed his hands from his blood; and the traitor, who sold him into their power to gratify his sordid avarice, hanged himself, from remorse of conscience for having, as he confessed, "betrayed *the innocent blood*." Perfection of outward character indicates perfection of inward principle.

He whose whole life was without blemish, was without blemish also in heart. The omniscient and holy God saw, in the soul of Jesus, the perfect purity of his law, without a spot of imperfection.

This remarkable person, thus perfectly innocent, was yet distinguished by a life of poverty, reproach, and various sufferings, terminating in a death, painful, ignominious, and, according to the Jewish law, accursed; he appears, also, to have been the subject of such deep and secret agonies in his mind, as could not be accounted for, by either the prospect or the immediate pressure of any of his outward sufferings.

That he was a sufferer, is a matter of indisputable historical fact. But the fact is a very strange one. Do you admit the innocence of Jesus? I do not mean his innocence merely of the crimes falsely laid to his charge by his enemies, but the sinless perfection of his character. If you do, how will you account for his sufferings? How will you reconcile the idea of suffering and death with that of innocence, under the government of "the righteous God who loveth righteousness?" There is no analogy, or parallel case with which to compare it. That in the ordinary course of Divine Providence, the good sometimes suffer, while the wicked prosper, is true; but it is not enough. When we speak of the *good*, in reference to our fellow-men, we use the term not in an absolute, but a comparative sense. We do not mean the *innocent*, for "*all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" and when any of the human race suffer affliction, it is still infinitely less than their iniquities deserve. In short, the idea of suffering, in our notions of the government of a just and holy God, is inseparable from that of guilt. If it were not that all have sinned, none could suffer or die.

The sufferings of Jesus, we must therefore presume, were not on his own account; that is, for any evil in himself. What, then, was their cause? What the purpose they were designed to answer?

The idea of their being intended as a mere example of patience and fortitude, or as a simple attestation of his sincerity, will never satisfy the mind of any one who duly considers the confounding view of the government of God, which is presented in the agonies of perfect innocence, contemplated even apart from *the dignity of the sufferer*. For the claims, in this respect, of Jesus of Nazareth, were not less singular than the beauty of holiness displayed in his character. He called himself the Christ, the Messiah, or Anointed of God. John 4 : 25, 26 ; 10 : 24, 25 ; Matt. 16 : 16, 17, etc. While he usually took the designation of the Son of man, a title which itself implies a peculiar eminence above the sons of men in general, he yet spake of himself as having come down from Heaven, and being still in Heaven, John 3 : 13 ; as having existed before the days of Abraham, and that, too, in terms corresponding to those which are employed to express the self-existence of Jehovah, John 8 : 58, with Exod. 3 : 14 ; as being the Son of God, by which his enemies understood him, and without his contradicting them, to make himself equal with God, John 5 : 17, 18, etc. ; as being one with that God whom he denominated his Father, which they justly interpreted as declaring himself God. John 10 : 30–38 ; 14 : 8–11. All that he said of himself besides, he confirmed by many and splendid miracles, which infallibly proved that his claims were not founded in presumption, but that God was with him. John 3 : 2 ; 6 : 36, etc.

What, then, shall we make of all this ? The idea of such a person as this, suffering unto death, in the manner before described, must appear, when duly attended to, a most stupendous and overwhelming thought. Weigh it seriously in your mind, and then proceed to consider with

me the explanation which the Scriptures give of this mysterious event; the reason there assigned for the sufferings and death of this wonderful person.

Hear his own account of the matter, expressed in terms which are in themselves sufficiently plain, and which accord with the language of all the inspired writers on the same subject. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19 : 10. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3 : 14, 15. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever. And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." John 6 : 51. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Matt. 20 : 28. "He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matt. 26 : 27, 28.

There is a perfect harmony between this language and that of the prophets who foretold his sufferings, and the apostles who proclaimed their accomplishment. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin. He bare the sin of many." Isa. 53 : 5, 6, 10, 12. "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself." Dan. 9 : 26. "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" John 1 : 29.

Such was the language of ancient prophets, and of his immediate forerunner, John the Baptist.

The testimony of the apostles is the same, in numberless passages of their writings. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood." Rom. 3 : 24, 25. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Rom. 5 : 6. "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." 1 Cor. 15 : 3. "He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. 5 : 21. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Col. 1 : 14; Eph. 1 : 7. "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." Eph. 5 : 2. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." Tit. 2 : 14. "Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did once, when he offered up himself." Heb. 7 : 27. "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Heb. 9 : 26. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Heb. 9 : 28. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Pet. 1 : 18, 19. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." 1 Pet. 2 : 24. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God." 1 Pet. 3 : 18. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John, 1 : 7. "He is the

propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John, 2 : 2. "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Rev. 1 : 5. "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Rev. 5 : 9.

In such expressions as these, which run through the whole New Testament, and especially in the frequent references made to the ancient sacrifices, the idea of substitution, atonement, propitiation, is plainly and decidedly held forth, as affording the reason of the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. The utmost stretch of human ingenuity cannot frame a consistent interpretation of these and many other similar passages of Scripture, without admitting that the death of Christ was a true and proper sacrifice for sin—that his blood was the blood of atonement.

What, then, do you ask, is the meaning of atonement? The question is one of great importance. Let the following considerations respecting it be attended to with due solemnity of mind.

The very word *atonement* conveys some idea of its nature. It signifies properly the being *at one*, in a state of concord, friendship, or agreement; or the bringing into this state of agreement, the effecting of this union; and hence, by an easy and natural figure, *the means* by which such union is effected. It implies, then, the idea of a previous state of separation, of distance, and, in some respect or other, of hostility between two parties. In the transcendently important instance of atonement now under consideration, these parties are, the everlasting God, and his creature, man. Of such parties, the former must necessarily be right, and the latter wrong. The offence cannot be mutual. It must be all on one side. The undivided guilt must lie with

the creature. It is the sin of man that has separated between him and his Maker, deprived him of the approbation and complacent love of the holy God, and laid him under a righteous sentence of condemnation and wrath.

This being the state of all, the race being depraved and guilty in its origin, and all having sinned and come short of the glory of God; the offending creature cannot, without the most flagrant presumption and impiety, come forward to treat for life with his justly offended Creator. In this matter, the sinner can have nothing to say. It is his to tremble and submit. If there is any way of escape, any means of deliverance, any ground of pardon and acquittal, that way, those means, this ground, must be appointed by the Sovereign whose authority he has violated, by the Judge whose holy law has sentenced him to death; and such appointment the offended and dishonored Sovereign is, in no respect, bound to make: if it is made, it must be the effect of infinite and free mercy.

The atonement revealed in the Gospel, as having been made by the sacrifice of the Son of God, is an appointment answering perfectly to this description. It is the result of pure grace, of mere mercy, in behalf of creatures, guilty, unworthy, and, but for such interposition, irremediably lost.

The atonement being appointed by God himself, necessarily leads us to view it as the *effect*, not the *cause* of his love to sinners. It is of essential consequence that this remark should be kept in mind. When we speak of the death of Christ as an atonement, or as rendering the Divine Being *propitious* to sinners, we should beware of supposing that any thing is meant by these expressions, like the production of a change in the Divine nature or character, as if the blessed God needed a motive to pity, an inducement

to be merciful, a price for love and grace. Far from our minds be such a thought! Jehovah is eternally, immutably, infinitely compassionate and merciful. To suppose an alteration produced by the mediation of Christ, from previous vindictive cruelty to compassionate kindness, is unscriptural and absurd. But the case stands thus: While God is infinite in love, he is infinite also in holiness, justice, and truth. His character is infinite goodness, perfect excellence. Every part of his conduct is the result of this infinite goodness, harmonizing in all its parts; his blessed nature being one and immutable. When he executes the demands of justice, he does not violate the claims of mercy; when he extends mercy, he can do it no otherwise than in consistency with the glory of justice.

Now, as a righteous Governor, Jehovah is displeased with the violation of his authority; while, from the infinite benignity of his nature, he is at the same time inclined to forgiveness. The grand question, then, comes to be—How may such forgiveness be extended to the guilty, so as to satisfy the claims of infinite justice, and thus to preserve, in its full dignity, the character of the Governor, with the rights of his government, and the sanctions of his law? It is obvious, that the rendering God, in this view, propitious, refers not to the production of love, but to the mode of its expression. How love may be expressed in such a way as that, in the very expression of it, holiness and justice shall be also and equally conspicuous.

When God is said to be displeased with any of his creatures, he regards them, not as creatures, but as sinners. He has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; but he necessarily hates sin; and the punishment of it is required both by the glory of his righteousness, and by the general

good, which sin tends to ruin. It is in this view that God is said to be "angry with the wicked every day," Psalm 7 : 11 ; "to have his face set against them that do evil," Psalm 34 : 16 ; "to hate all the workers of iniquity," Psalm 5 : 5 ; "to reveal his wrath from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," Rom. 1 : 18, etc. And when God forgives, he is spoken of as "turning from the fierceness of his anger, and taking away all his wrath," Psalm 85 : 3 ; "having his anger turned away," Isa. 12 : 1 ; "not retaining his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy," Mic. 7 : 18 ; pacified towards the objects of his forgiveness, for all that they have done. Ezek. 16 : 63, etc.

This is propitiation, or atonement : and the Scriptures universally declare that it is *in Christ Jesus*, on account of his humiliation, obedience, sufferings, and death, that Jehovah is thus propitious or well-pleased ; because this work of Christ, containing a full display of his holiness, justice, and truth, in connection with his mercy, renders the exercise of this last perfection towards guilty creatures, in their pardon and acceptance, consistent with the eternal glory of all the former.

The strict *letter* of the divine law requires the personal punishment of the offender. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Ezek. 18 : 4, 20. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Gal. 3 : 10. The law, then, pronounces sentence of death on the offender, while it makes no provision, as in the very nature of the thing, indeed, it could not, for a remedy ; gives no hint of the possibility of his escaping the punishment which is due to him as a transgressor. The glorious *spirit* of the law, however, is as essentially preserved, the great end of retributive justice as

fully answered, and the authority and honor of the divine government as completely secured, by the infliction of the righteous penalty in the person of a substitute, of sufficient dignity, voluntary in the undertaking, and publicly acknowledged in this character by the offended Sovereign, as if it were inflicted on the guilty criminals themselves.

Nay, when we contemplate, as in the case before us, the dignity of the *Sufferer* as *infinite*, these ends appear answered, not merely *as fully*, but in a degree even infinitely greater. In the sufferings and death of the divine Jesus, the truth of God, in fulfilling his threatenings against sin, and his justice in executing its righteous punishment, are manifested, in a way unspeakably more impressive and affecting than if vengeance had fallen, to its full extent, on the miserable transgressors themselves, who, as the effect of his death, by believing on him, escape perdition, and obtain everlasting life. It is thus, then, that we see God just in justifying the ungodly: clearing the sinner, but not his guilt; blessing him with pardon and life, yet "taking vengeance of his inventions;" freely, fully, and eternally forgiving, yet in such a way, on such a ground, that the act of forgiveness itself declares the sin which he pardons to be "the abominable thing which he hates:"—in a word, as occupying that unspeakably sublime, and, to us sinners, inexpressibly interesting character, "The just God and the Saviour."

Consistent with these observations, is the particular view given by the apostle Paul, in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, respecting the great design of the atonement, or propitiatory sacrifice of Christ: "whom God hath set forth a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past,

through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3: 25, 26. Observe the expression. Christ was set forth as a propitiation, to declare God's righteousness, that he *might be just* in justifying the believer in Jesus. It is intimated, that all the sins which had been forgiven in the ages preceding the fulness of time, were remitted with a prospective reference to what was then to be done; to the atonement which was then to be made. The righteousness of God, in such forbearance and forgiveness, was at that time declared; the ground on which it had all along been extended to sinners being then fully exhibited: and the same is the ground on which he is still just in justifying the ungodly.

But how, are you ready to ask, is it consistent with divine justice, that the innocent should be made to suffer for the guilty? If, by the innocent being *made to suffer* for the guilty, you mean that the substitute is involuntary, having no power to choose, but enduring, against his will, sufferings arbitrarily inflicted; I answer, that the case, with regard to the great atonement spoken of, is far otherwise. The Son of God was a voluntary Surety, a willing Sufferer; his nature being such, indeed, that no suffering could possibly be inflicted upon him by the will of another, apart from his own free choice. "Though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Phil. 2: 6-8. He is represented as saying, "Lo, I come: I delight to do thy will, O my God;" which *will* was the "offer-

ing of his body once for all," as a sacrifice for sin. Heb. 10: 7, 10, with Psalm 40: 7, 8. "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. I lay down my life for the sheep: no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." John 10: 11, 15, 18.

Consider, farther, that if an atonement was to be made at all, it could be made by no other than a being uniting perfect innocence to this sovereign power over his own life. The slightest degree of guilt would have more than disqualified him who was chargeable with it, for atoning for the sins of others; it would have rendered an atonement necessary for himself. Do you admit the innocence, the sinless perfection of the character of Jesus? If you do, before you ask, Is it consistent with justice that the innocent should suffer *for the guilty?* answer the question, Is it consistent with justice that the innocent should suffer *at all?* There is no disputing against matters of fact. Here is the innocent suffering: and unless it is *for the guilty*, in the way of *voluntary substitution*, how is the strange fact to be accounted for? Some sufficient purpose it must have been intended to answer: and what purpose can be imagined more worthy of the God of unbounded goodness and unspotted purity, than the salvation of guilty creatures in a way that should glorify to the uttermost both these parts of his character?

Taking the matter, then, in this light, think, my fellow-sinner, what a view is here exhibited of the love and mercy of the blessed God! The Scriptures dwell much on this. "Scarcely for a righteous may will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5: 7, 8. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son

to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John, 4 : 10. What a heart must that be—and yet such is the heart of every one of us by nature—how "desperately wicked," how impenetrable to every holy and generous sentiment of affection and gratitude, that is capable of rejecting the offers of this astonishing mercy of the God of heaven! Lay to heart, I pray you, that pointed question, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Heb. 2 : 3. A question which strongly intimates, not only that to escape is in this case *impossible*, but also that to *expect* to escape is beyond measure *unreasonable*.

The evil of sin is here set before you in a most affecting and impressive light; and the utter impossibility of its passing unpunished under the government of the righteous God, is ascertained beyond the possibility of a doubt. Remember, then, that you are guilty, and that with this sin-avenging God you have to do. Remember, that if He should mark iniquity, you could not stand; for, having sinned, you are condemned already by the sentence of his righteous law. By no exertions of yours, by no attempts which you may make to serve and please God, while you believe not on Christ, is it in your power to mend the matter. To try by any such means to *make your peace with God*, is a vain and fruitless task; and one, too, that is highly presumptuous and dishonoring to God, because it implies that he who is infinitely holy can be satisfied with the works of a sinful and polluted creature. Renounce this idle hope. It can never stand.

"Christ is our peace." The work on which our peace with God must rest, is that to which I have been directing your attention, the perfect obedience and atonement of the Son of God; a work finished by him, so long ago as when

he bowed his head and gave up the ghost on Calvary; a work, therefore, in which no sinner ever had, or ever can have, any part, either of the performance or of the honor. This is the work in which Jehovah is well-pleased; and on account of which he freely bestows on the chief of sinners all the blessings of eternal life. Here rests for ever the delight of the eternal God: here the infinite fulness of his mercy is treasured up. Deceive not yourselves with the expectation that this mercy can be found anywhere else; or that God will ever, even to eternity, bless a guilty creature with his favor, except in Christ Jesus his beloved Son.

But while mercy is to be found nowhere else, here it is set before you free in its exercise, and boundless in its extent. "The wages of sin is death: but the *gift of God* is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." My object is not to lead you to despair of mercy, but only to despair of it where it cannot be found; by excluding your hope from the law, or from any view you can take of your own character, to shut you up, by a blessed necessity, to the free grace of God, revealed in the Gospel of his Son.

As sinners we are lost, and by the law our case is desperate. If we knew no more, this would be a dreadful truth indeed. But why refuse to admit the worst respecting our state, when there is an all-sufficient remedy? Why cling for hope to the law, whose voice to every transgressor is nothing but cursing and condemnation, when we may have "good hope, through grace?" Why be reluctant to confess ourselves justly condemned, when a free and full pardon is offered to us of all our sins? Why vainly deny our helplessness, and inability to do any thing to commend ourselves to God, when Christ, we are assured, died for such as are *without strength?*

Alas! sin has made us proud; even that which ought to cover us with shame, and seal our lips in speechless self-abhorrence, has made us proud and high-minded; and this pride it is, that makes us loth to own ourselves so completely undone and destitute, as to be dependent on mere mercy. May God, in infinite compassion, subdue this pride in your soul, and make you willing to be a debtor for your salvation to mercy alone, to receive it as his *gift*, without money and without price!

In no other way will God bestow it; but in *this* way, he is ready to confer it on the chief of sinners, for the sake of his Son. To him he has given testimony; having, by his resurrection from the dead, declared himself satisfied with the work of salvation which he had finished; pronounced his righteousness perfect, his atonement all-sufficient; and having revealed this record concerning his Son, it is his sovereign appointment that "he who believeth shall be saved." No one can conceive it to be right, that the efficacy of the blood of Christ should extend to those who despise it. But he who believes in the blood of Jesus, as the blood of an all-sufficient atoning sacrifice, and seeks forgiveness and life, solely on the footing of the merits of this atonement, as a guilty, and otherwise ruined and hopeless sinner, shall in no wise be cast out. "We are ambassadors for Christ," says one of his apostles, "as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God; for he hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. 5: 20, 21.

If this atonement be thus the ground of your hope, let me conclude, by reminding you, that your obligations to divine mercy will necessarily excite you, as "not your own,

but bought with a price," to "glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's," 1 Cor. 6: 20; to "live to Him who died for you and rose again." 2 Cor. 5: 15. "If the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God, has purged your conscience from dead works," you will "serve the living God." Heb. 9: 14. You will love what he loves, and hate what he hates; shun with vigilance whatever he condemns, and pursue with ardor whatever he approves. You will delight in communion with him. A present sense of his favor, with the hope of perfect freedom from sin, and of the full and everlasting enjoyment of the divine image and the divine love, will be the grand solace of your cares, and the source of your chief joys.

Depend upon it, you have no interest in Jesus as a Saviour, if you are not subject to him as Lord. You have no true and solid hope of being with him and like him hereafter, if you are not now, under the influence of this hope, "purifying yourself, even as he is pure." 1 John, 3: 3. "He gave himself for sinners, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Tit. 2: 14. "This, then, is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John, 1: 5–7.

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No. 46.

SUBJECTS FOR CONSIDERATION.

EXTRACTED FROM REYNOLDS'S COMPASSIONATE ADDRESS.

1. *Consider yourselves.* What! know you not yourselves? Are you so intent upon things without, that you can never look within? Do you not see a great variety of creatures lower than you, and made for your use? What else are the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, and the fishes of the sea? Are you not much better than they? Are you not furnished with greater excellencies and powers? And who made you to differ? Who gave you knowledge, and judgment, and conscience? Who put the sheep and oxen, and other cattle, in subjection to you? Was it not some great Creator and Disposer of all things? Was it not some great Lord that is good to man, and prepared him a well-furnished world to dwell in? Who made these curious bodies? the head to govern and guide the movements of the members; the stomach to receive the food, and convert it into nourishment; the lungs to breathe; and the heart to admit the blood and pour it out again into all the members and limbs? How wonderfully are you made! Who formed this soul that gives life and motion to the body; that knows, judges, and remembers; that is capable of noble services, and of great joys and miseries? O, foolish and unthankful men! that forget themselves, and their Creator. Alas, how insensible have you been all this while! How have you lost your thoughts, and minds, and souls, amidst the cares, and vices, and noise of the world! How dead and lost have you been to your Maker, and to all the love and service that you owe him!

2. *Consider God.* How great and glorious he is that

made you, and ordained all these things! He is indeed the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity: so vast is he, that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him: so glorious, that the purest, brightest angels cover their faces before him! Look up to the heavens, and consider the wisdom and power that shine there! Behold the firmament which hangs over our heads! This glorious sun that shines by day; these thousands of stars that adorn the heavens at night! Look around upon the earth; what riches and stores are there! Grass and herbs for the cattle; birds and cattle for men; seas and rivers to water the earth! "O, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" How sad it is, that your hearts are turned away from God! That you have no more delight in him, or desire after him! How sad it is, that you should live so estranged from the God who alone can make this world a comfort to you, and prepare you therein for the enjoyment of a better!

3. *Consider the Divine Law.* Has God made you reasonable creatures, and do you think he has given no laws for your direction? Does he not justly expect honor and worship from you, and has he not taught you how to worship him? Do you not find the commands of God in your Bible? Yet when did you learn or study the law of God? When did you think of the things that are commanded and forbidden there? When did you find that God's law is exceeding broad? that it reaches the thoughts, and judges the secrets of the heart? Alas, how little have you loved your duty! Do you think God has forgotten his laws as much as you have; and that he will never call you to an account for your ignorance, stubbornness, and disobedience? Surely the Judge of all the earth will maintain his law, and will do right. What! will you bid defiance to the Majesty of Heaven? Will you scorn his wisdom, and goodness, and power? What! will you trample upon his mercy, and patience, and love? Will you dare his vengeance, and

provoke him to his face? Poor souls! think what you are doing. Do you think God does not hate sin, and that he will not be avenged on all the workers of iniquity? How much guilt is there in one sin! And how much more in a whole life of sin! And how much more if you live and die without repentance!

4. *Consider the office of Conscience.* It will make you, some time or other, consider; it will not always be silenced. Have you no conscience? Would you have the world to know you have none? Have you no inward shame for any thing you say or do? Can you live without conscience? Have you no fear of God; no reflection on yourselves; no regard to the law of God? Can you contentedly commit adultery and whoredom, or cheat, or steal, or break the Sabbath, or swear, or get drunk, or fall into a passion? What hearts have you! how unfit to live among mankind! Does conscience never accuse you? If you have no conscience, how much worse are you than the brutes! and that because you are likely to do much more mischief. If you have a conscience, what is its language? Does it not tell you that you have souls to be saved, and work to be done, for eternity? Does it not tell you that death is coming, and that you are unready, and know not what will become of you for ever? Did you never feel the pangs of a guilty conscience? If you ever did, consider how enraged it would be, if God should open conscience more, and set your sins in order before your eyes, and make you feel the weight of them! What a troubled conscience would you then have! It would give you no rest day nor night; it would be a constant torture to you, and as a worm that never dies! Oh, stand in awe of your conscience! See that it be reconciled to God, and cleansed from dead works, that you may truly serve the living God.

5. *Consider the World you inhabit.* It is a sinful world, continually breaking God's laws; the fear and love of God, aims and designs for God, are rarely to be found: ungodli-

ness everywhere reigns. Can we wonder, then, that God is angry with such a world as this, and that he sends woes and plagues? We find some complain of poverty and wants; some of sickness and pains; others of shame and reproaches; some are wronged and oppressed; almost all have their crosses, disappointments, and vexations, in one kind or other; and death at last infallibly comes and cuts down all. And should we be fond of such a world as this? A failing, withering world; a vain, vexatious, dying world! Will you not seek a better world than this? Will you sell your souls for this? What shall it profit you to gain such a world as this, and then lose your own souls, and perish for ever? Oh, what need have you to be saved from this present evil world, and to set your hearts and hopes upon a better!

6. *Consider the nature of the Christian Religion.* It is the way of serving and pleasing God, which is established in and by Jesus Christ, and which is taught us in the New Testament. Do you take care to learn your religion from thence? Or have you no religion? If you have none, are you not hypocrites? for do you not profess some religion or other? If you have no religion, sure you have no conscience; and, if no conscience, what are you? If you have any religion, where is it? From whence do you learn it? From the customs and commands of men? From your parents and education? Alas, what are customs? Always good? Is education always agreeable to the word of Christ? Do you pretend to be Christians, and yet not know what Christianity is, and what it means? Are you strangers to the religion you pretend to, and by which you hope to be saved? Do you think that a religion you do not understand will do you any good; or that it is enough to have the name of religion, when you have none of the power and practice? How easily do poor sinners delude their own souls, and cheat them into eternal darkness!

7. *Consider the Bible.* The book that God has sent you, to teach you the way to heaven, and happiness, and himself;

the book that is to make you good and wise; yea, wise to salvation; the book that contains the law of God and Gospel of Christ: the law is expressive of your obligation; the Gospel is the way in which you are to be pardoned, and saved, and accepted with God. There you are told what God has done in the world; how he had dealt with man when he had made him good and happy; what he designed by sending his Son, and what the Son of God has done to redeem and recover lost sinners to God. There you learn how holy men have walked with God, and have been blessed by him; and how evil men have offended him, and have been punished. There you are taught how to believe and repent, and overcome the world, and be eternally happy. O, blessed book! how is it slighted and despised! O, wicked world! that will not value, and study, and learn the book of God, the word of truth, and word of salvation! Oh, the patience of God, that so bears with the world which disregards and forsakes his law and covenant, his will and grace, discovered to perishing mankind!

8. *Consider the Lord Jesus Christ.* How often do you speak of him; yet how little do you know him! What, know you not Christ? Is he the head and Author of your religion, and yet you know him not? Are you called by his name, called Christians, and yet know not who Jesus Christ is? What do you think of him? What are his excellencies? or has he none in your eyes? What do you think of his person, his offices, work, and design? What do you think of his taking our nature, and coming into our world? What do you know of his life and death, of his miracles, and righteousness, and Spirit! What do you know of his dying for our sins, and for our redemption; of his rising from the dead, and going up into heaven, and sending down his Holy Spirit? What do you know of his reigning and interceding in heaven, and of his designing to come again to judge the whole world? O, blind neglecters of your own souls, that will not know and remember him that came to

redeem and save mankind! How will you look him in the face when he comes again? He now stands before you, calling, inviting, encouraging you to come to him. He says, "Why will you not have compassion on your own souls? Can your hearts endure, or can your hands be strong, in the day of wrath that is approaching? It is but a little while before your hopes and presumptions will forsake you, and leave you eternally miserable; look unto me, and be ye saved; come unto me, and I will ease you of your sins and sorrows, tears and burdens, and give rest to your souls; come, I entreat you, delay not, put me off no longer, eternity is at the door."

9. *Consider what Repentance and Conversion are.* It may be you have often heard the name, but little know the thing: do you know what it is to be new-born, or born from above? to have a heart and mind renewed by the Spirit of God? Know you not that you have need that a great change should be made upon your hearts and consciences, before you can be fit to enter into heaven? Do you not know what repentance is: that it is a turning with your whole heart from sin to God? See you not that you must be entirely altered in temper and spirit, before you can love God and Christ with all your mind and strength? Do you not perceive how vain and foolish, how carnal and worldly, and corrupt you are? Do you not see that you have need to be new creatures: to have new hearts, new spirits, new affections; that you may be such as the word of God requires, and such as may be prepared for death, and appearing before God? How long will you continue in your sins; in the love and practise of sin? How long will you live enemies to God, without conversion, or turning to the living God? *Turn ye! turn ye! Why will ye die?*

10. *Consider Death.* It is coming: it will be well if it does not seize you before you have duly thought of it. Will it not come and divide your soul from the body? Will it not come and cut down the body, and lay it in the cold earth?

O, deluded sinners! Who has bewitched you, that you should not prepare for a messenger that is coming to carry you shortly into another world? How would I weep for dying mortals, that will not think whither they are going. O, wicked, tempting world! that will not suffer men to look and prepare for death. O, cruel sin and flesh! that lull souls asleep, till they are landed in endless darkness and despair. Dear friends, awake; rouse up sense and reason, and bethink you where you will be in a little while. How many funerals do we see, and how many mourners go about the streets! In how few days must your faces be changed, your eyes and lips be closed, this warm and active body stretched out as a cold, dead corpse, confined in a coffin, and laid in a dark grave out of sight! And will you then be proud, and vain, and gay, and worldly, as you are now? Dear brethren, think of death, and make all wise and holy preparation for it.

11. *Consider the Day of Judgment!* That awful day, when all mankind must be doomed to their eternal state and abode. O, blessed day! The most blessed that ever came, to some; the most doleful that ever was, to others. Who can tell the sorrows or joys of that day? A day, which, one would think, should continually keep the world in awe. How will ye, guilty sinners, look the Judge in the face! What will ye do, when the archangel's voice and trumpet shall open your graves, and startle you there, and draw you forth to appear before all the world? How will ye be able to behold all that company? How will your consciences then bear you out? How will you endure to have your names called over, your accounts demanded, your talents of time, and holy means, and mercies, reckoned for? What account can you give of what you have been doing in the body, ever since you were born? How will you bear the Judge's voice, and the eternal sentence he will pronounce, O ye that forget that day; ye that will not remember that the Lord is coming to judge the world in righteousness?

12. *Consider what Hell is!* Consider it, that you may not go thither. O, what tongue can tell, or heart conceive the sharpness, and severity, and length of its torments? There is the abode of sinful angels and impenitent men. And how great is the power of God's wrath, and the weight of his fury! How dreadful must his justice and indignation be! The worm is there that will never die: the fire is there that will never be quenched: there are weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth: there pains and stings of conscience: there horror, confusion, and despair! Lord, ever save us from that place of torment. Sit down, poor mortals, and think, what if you should be in hell before this month is ended? And why not you as well as many others already? What do you more than they? How little care do you take to prevent damnation? Awake, all you that have souls to be saved! Beware of running into the woes and flames of hell.

13. *Consider what Heaven is!* But who can tell the joys and pleasures that are there! O, that you were willing to go and see, and taste them: you will find at last, that it was well worth all your pains and care. There are all the springs of life, and peace, and bliss; there dwells the eternal God, in whose presence is fulness of joy for evermore: there dwells the Lord Jesus, who will fill you with happiness by the light of his countenance: there dwell the happy angels, and there the holy souls that are gone from the world, who are now made perfect, and will make you joyful. If all this affects you not; if heaven and its inhabitants are despised; if your own interests are thus cruelly slighted; alas, what will you do? Yet, once more, be entreated to think a little on these things! Are they not things fit and worthy to be thought of? Will not the meditation of them do you good? Will it not tend to make you better and wiser; more fit for death and a better world? The Lord help you to understand and seek the things that make for your eternal peace, before it be too late.

No. 47.

TO THE AFFLICTED.

It is natural for you to desire the removal of that which troubles you, and for this purpose to use all suitable means. Happy will you be if you are equally concerned to improve the season of affliction, so as to be the better for it ever afterwards. Be entreated, then, to attend to some serious inquiries, and thus obey the divine word: "In the day of adversity, consider." Eccl. 7: 14.

1. Has this affliction led you to *proper thoughts of sin?* Men in general think lightly of it, and especially in a state of outward ease and prosperity; but when they feel the punishment of sin, in the disorders of their frame, and in distressing losses, then their thoughts become serious and sad. Jeshurun, that is, the people of Israel, prospered, and forsook God; they were brought low, and then they sought after him. Thus, it may be, you are afflicted, that you may be effectually taught that it is an evil and bitter thing to depart from a holy God.

2. "Have I inquired"—we recommend you to say—"into the special *cause* of this particular affliction? Was I not a stranger to God and to his grace, and was not this trial intended to bring me to the knowledge of himself? Have I concurred in this gracious design, or have I not rather opposed it? Have I been a backslider, and has the Lord used these painful means to restore me? O, let me then adore his goodness, that he hath not in anger said, 'Let him alone—he loved idols—after idols let him go.' Is the Lord preparing me for any great exertions in his service? Is he preparing me for a wider field of usefulness?" Those that are remarkably tried and tempted, are often thus prepared to assist and comfort others. The Lord gives them the tongue of the learned, that they may be able to speak a word in season.

3. Has this affliction *humbled you*, by affecting you with

a sense of your own depravity in particular? In a time of temporal ease, plenty, and comfort, we are prone to think all is well, and to put far from us the work of self-examination. Providence hedges up our path, and smites us with the rod: we then reflect on our ways; and if we view them as we ought, the sight humbles us; and we know that humility leads to honor.

4. Has this affliction endeared to you *the Saviour, our* Lord Jesus Christ? His glory is infinite. He is the chief of ten thousand, and altogether lovely. For our sake, he once became a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief. All the angels worship him. The prophets and apostles celebrate his glories in the highest strains of devotion and gratitude. But nothing leads men to prize him like an experimental acquaintance with their need of him. A view of the enormity and aggravation of our sins, particularly in the time of affliction, should induce us to fly to the atonement. The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; and in proportion as we feel our disorder, will the good physician be esteemed.

5. Have you, under this trial, been led to see your need of the *aids of the Holy Spirit*, and the supports of his grace? What are you without this knowledge? What is affliction, if the divine Spirit do not sanctify it, but the beginning of ruin? The Spirit of God is emphatically styled the Comforter. O! cease not to pray for the abundant communication of his grace.

6. Have you been led to *converse more with the Scriptures?* Affliction is often the best of commentators; it explains many a hard text, and opens many a precious promise. Have you compared the state of your heart with the word of God? Have you been enabled to live upon the promises? Can you say with Jeremiah, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them;" and with David, "They are sweeter to my taste than honey, or the honey-comb. O, how precious are thy words unto me?"

7. Have you learned *patience and submission* under the

hand of God in these sufferings? It often happens that persons who have been little tried, repine and murmur—they are like the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; but when trained and disciplined, they find that tribulation worketh patience; patience, experience; and experience, hope; even hope that maketh not ashamed. How is your heart wrought upon in this respect? Do you complain, or are you able to say, "Father, not my will, but thine be done?"

8. Have you learned in your affliction to be *thankful for past mercies?* While we enjoy the comforts of life, we are generally too insensible of our obligations to Providence. It is the removal of our comforts that makes us feel their value. Thus sickness teaches the worth of health, and pain the value of ease. Thus, in a state of banishment from Zion, David learned to think and speak with peculiar fervor of its privileges, and particularly of the preciousness of the divine word. And thus the Prodigal Son knew not the sweetness of his father's bread, till he longed for the husks which the swine did eat. As affliction shows us the value of our mercies, so, when sanctified, it moderates our desire and use of them. It teaches us their importance, so as to make us thankful; while, at the same time, it shows us the insufficiency of all blessings, merely temporal, to confer supreme happiness.

9. Have you learned a lesson of *sympathy and compassion towards others?* "Thou shalt not oppress a stranger," says the Jewish law; "for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Ex. 23 : 9. Affliction is profitable indeed, when it melts the heart into sympathy and affection. In this case, others reap the benefit of it as well as those who are exercised thereby. Has affliction produced this happy effect in you?

10. Have you been led to see more of the *vanity of the world*, and all its enjoyments? Alas, what are flatteries, what are titles, what are amusements, to one agonizing with pain! Miserable comforts, indeed! And especially if the

heart be wounded with conviction of guilt, then the very things in which we may have delighted in the hour of health and prosperity, become our torment. The hand of sickness writes vanity on every enjoyment below the sun.

11. Have you been led to *think more seriously of death and eternity?* Sickness renders death, as it were, visible, points to his terrific form, and shows his empoisoned dart. The mind is then abstracted from all the objects which used to divert its attention, and the eye of contemplation is fixed upon the eternal world. Then all the business, and all the pleasures of the present world, appear but a "dream—an empty show;" and those objects which once seemed distant and uninteresting, are now the only important realities.

Finally. *How stand you prepared for your everlasting state?* Suppose this affliction should terminate in death, are you prepared for that infinitely important change? Suppose, this night thy soul should be required of thee, how wouldst thou appear before God? Is thy soul well assured of her pardon through the Redeemer's blood? Hast thou the evidence of a work of grace upon thy heart? Art thou prepared to unite in the enjoyments of the blessed? Would heaven be a heaven indeed to thee? If so, then art thou equally prepared to live or die: then thou mayest say, with a good man, "If I live, God will be with me: if I die, I shall be with God." Or as a great apostle said, "For me to live, is Christ;" that is, all my hopes, and desires, and enjoyments, centre in him; but "to die"—to enter into his immediate presence, and to be for ever with him—this "is" everlasting "gain."

Is the afflicted reader *recovering* through the good hand of God upon him? let him say with David, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" Let him be persuaded to take with him words, and turn unto the Lord, and say,

"O thou God of mercy, with thee are the issues of life and death. Perfect that which concerneth me and my

health, and let my remaining days, whether few or many, be devoted to thy service. I was brought low, and thou hast helped me. Accept, in the name of Jesus thy dear Son, the tribute of praise which now I bring. Suffer me not to fall into those snares and sins, which in time past have been so injurious. Lord, I accept the punishment of my iniquity; may I never return to sin and folly. Thou hast said, 'The heart is deceitful, and desperately wicked:' to this humiliating declaration of thy word I cordially subscribe. O, do thou hold up my goings in future, that my footsteps may not slide. May I redeem lost time, and, with redoubled vigor and diligence, perform my duty in the station which thou hast allotted me. Never let me cease to feel my entire dependence on thee for life, breath, and all things, temporal and spiritual. Before I was afflicted, I went astray; now, Lord, I desire to keep thy word. Grant, in thy mercy, that sin may be imbittered; that the glorious Saviour may be rendered precious; that I may find the ways of wisdom to be pleasantness, and her paths peace; and that, by the assistance of thy Holy Spirit, I may do those things only which are well-pleasing in thy sight. And after having served my generation according to thy will, may I fall asleep in Jesus, and be gathered to thy people to sing thy praise in glory everlasting." Amen.

Now, the man that prays as he ought, will endeavor to live as he prays. Lamentable is the fact, that many derive no spiritual benefit from their afflictions, but rather grow worse and worse; so Pharaoh, king of Egypt, after he had been visited with ten plagues, was hardened in his heart ten times more. Tribulation worketh patience, when God blesseth it; otherwise, through the corruption of human nature, it worketh impatience. Affliction of itself never changed any man's heart. "Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." Prov. 27: 22. Many, indeed, are those, of whom Jehovah says, "In their affliction they

will seek me early ;" but their "goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." Hos. 5 : 15 ; 6 : 4.

When the profligate sinner is laid on the bed of languishing, his conscience being awake, he is filled with remorse ; he sends for the minister ; he makes free and open confessions ; he desires to be prayed for ; he solicits the company of godly people ; he thinks of his wicked companions, and the crimes in which he united, with horror ; he despairs of salvation ; nevertheless, if God will spare his life, he vows amendment. But unless the powerful grace of the Spirit of God change his heart, what is the issue ? Divine mercy spares the rebel. He rises from his bed, and frequents, perhaps, for a few following Sabbaths, the house of God ; but he soon becomes irregular, he soon admits, as before his illness, the influence of trifling excuses. At length, he forsakes the house of God entirely. His convictions wear off, sin revives, old companions prevail, new temptations offer, and he plunges again into sin. The last state of that man is worse than the first. Beware lest thou come into the same condemnation ; resolve, but not in thine own strength ; put all thy trust in God ; and whether he remove thy affliction, or continue it, entreat him to sanctify and save thy soul.

You well know, says Rev. Mr. Hervey to an afflicted friend, that all afflictions, of what kind soever, proceed from God. "I form the light, and create darkness ; I make peace, and create evil ; I the Lord do all these things." Isa. 45 : 7. They spring not from the dust ; are not the effects of chance ; but the appointment of an all-wise, all-foreseeing God, who intends them all for the good of his creatures. This, I think, is the fundamental argument for resignation, and the grand source of comfort. This should be our first reflection, and our sovereign support. He that gave me being, and gave his own Son for my redemption, he has assigned me this suffering. What he ordains, who is boundless love, must be good : what he ordains, who is unerring wisdom, must be proper.

This reconciled Eli to the severest doom: "It is the Lord; and though grievous to human nature, and much more grievous to parental affection, yet it is unquestionably the best. Therefore I humbly acquiesce, I bow to the awful decree, and say from my very soul, Let him do what seemeth him good." 1 Sam. 3: 18.

This calmed the sorrows of Job, under all his unparalleled distresses: "The Lord gave me affluence and prosperity; the Lord has taken all away; rapacious hands and warring elements were only his instruments; therefore I submit, I adore, I bless his holy name."

This consolation fortified Christ at the approach of his inconceivably bitter agonies: "The cup, which not my implacable enemies, but my Father, by their administration, has given me, shall I not drink it?"

It is your Father, my dear friend, your heavenly Father, who loves you with an everlasting love, that has mingled some gall with your portion of life. Sensible of the beneficent hand from which the visitation comes, may you always bow in patient submission; and acknowledge, with the excellent, but afflicted monarch Hezekiah, "Good is the word of the Lord concerning me." 2 Kings, 20: 19.

All afflictions sent on the people of God are designed for blessings; to do us good at the latter end, however they may cross our desires, or disquiet our minds at present. "Happy," says the Spirit of inspiration, "is the man whom God correcteth," Job 5: 17; and that because his merciful chastenings, though not joyous, but grievous, "yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." Heb. 12: 11. God's ways are not as our ways. The children whom we love, we are apt to treat with blandishments and caresses, and too often to indulge to their hurt, if not to their ruin. But the Father of spirits is wise in his love, and out of kindness severe. Therefore it is said, "Whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Heb. 12: 6. Would you

not, my dear friend, be a child of that everlasting Father, whose favor is better than life? Affliction is one sign of your adoption into this inestimable relation. Would you not be an "heir of the inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away?" Affliction is your path to this blissful patrimony. "Through much tribulation we enter into the kingdom of God." Acts 14: 22. Would you not be made like your ever-blessed Redeemer? He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" and every disciple must expect to be as his master.

Should you inquire what benefits accrue from afflictions? Many and precious. They tend to wean us from the world. When our paths are strewed with roses, when nothing but music and odors float around, how apt are we to be enamoured with our present condition, and forget the crown of glory—forget Jesus, and everlasting ages. But affliction, with a faithful, though harsh voice, rouses us from the sweet delusion. Affliction warns our hearts to rise and depart from these inferior delights, because here is not our rest.

Afflictions tend to bring us to Christ. Christ has unspeakable and everlasting blessings to bestow, such as the world can neither give nor take away; such as are sufficient to pour the oil of gladness into our souls, which will rise above the waves of any earthly sorrow. But are we not, my dear friend, are we not most unhappily indolent and inattentive to these blessings, in the gay hours of an uninterrupted prosperity? It is very observable, that few made application to our divine Redeemer, in the days of his abode with us, but the children of affliction. The same spirit of supineness still possesses mankind. We undervalue, we disregard the Lord Jesus, and the unspeakable privileges of his Gospel, while all proceeds smoothly, and nothing occurs to discompose our tranquillity. But when misfortunes harass our circumstances, or sorrows oppress our minds, then we are willing, we are glad, we are earnest, to find rest in Christ.

No. 48.

TO

THE AGED.

BY REV. JOHN TOWNSEND,

BERMONDSEY.

Aged Friend—One who sincerely wishes your highest good, now addresses you upon that subject, which, of all others, is the most important. The number of your days is very nearly accomplished, and the things which should now occupy your attention, and with which you should be most familiar, are death, judgment, and eternity; awful subjects indeed! He that is old should be, in his own estimation, a dying man: he should realize something of the spirit of the apostle, when he says, "I die daily." He should esteem himself just at death's door, and stand prepared to hear this solemn address: "Set thine house in order; thou shalt die, and not live." Instead of this, how many aged persons are there in whom there is every sign of a speedy dissolution, who, in understanding, in inclination, and conduct, are yet children, entirely occupied with the trifles of time, and altogether unmindful of their souls and eternity! Is this your unhappy case?

Suffer, then, the word of exhortation. This Tract comes to you with the most friendly design; receive it as from the Lord, read it with attention, and as you read it, kneel down and entreat him to impress it upon your heart, that it may prove a real, and a lasting blessing to your soul. Remember, you will soon stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, there to answer for the deeds done in the body, whether

they be good, or whether they be evil. It will then avail you nothing to cry with the wicked Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his;" and nothing to seem righteous in the eyes of men. You must have on "the wedding garment;" you must be "born again;" you must be holy. Such only are ready for the Lord's coming; all others will be excluded when the bridegroom cometh, and the door is shut. In vain will they then say, "Lord, Lord, open unto us."

It is not only requisite to remind you of what is before you, but I recommend you carefully and frequently to look back upon the way which you have already come. This was the injunction laid upon Israel of old: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness." The Lord had so discovered to them his holiness and justice in chastening them for sin, and such rich grace and mercy in the forgiveness of it, that they might, with great propriety, have determined to "sing both of mercy and judgment."

Come then, my aged friend, look back upon the way which you have come; trace the leadings of God; call to your remembrance what he has done for you in a way of mercy, and how frequently he has spoken to you in his judgments. You have been the subject of his constant care and unmerited bounty. In your experience, from day to day, how many wants have been supplied, how many fears dispelled, how many dangers escaped, and how many deliverances wrought! If you would reckon them up in order, they are more than can be numbered. Ask now your own heart what good effect the boundless mercy of God has produced upon your soul. Do you not know that God, in all these dispensations, has been calling you to seek him, trust in him, and love him as the only substantial good? "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and

forbearance, and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; but, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds?" How have you acted towards your kind Benefactor through all the years that he has spared you? Have you thought upon him? Have you feared and loved him? Have you revered his holy name? Have you kept his Sabbath? Have you attended his ordinances? Have you made his word your guide, and his glory your chief concern? If you have not, ought not your consience to smite and reproach you to-day, as one of the most ungrateful of mortals, especially when you recollect how frequently, and how solemnly you have resolved, in the day of your affliction, that if God would spare and deliver you, you would fear and serve him till your dying day? Perhaps, on the contrary, you have served the world and sin with more eagerness than ever.

Does this Tract find you ignorant of yourself, ignorant of God and of the Holy Scriptures, and with all your might rushing forward in the company and in the spirit of those who are crowding the broad road which leadeth to destruction? Yes, to this day, it may be, you are a stranger to godly sorrow for sin, and to the saving power of that Gospel in which the forgiveness of it is preached through the Saviour's atoning blood. You have neither seen your own deformity in the glass of God's holy law, nor the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ, as shining in the blessed Gospel, through the beholding of which men "are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." No, you continue to bear the "image of the earthly." Your thoughts, your cares, and your pursuits, are earthly and sensual; hence, you live in the neglect of prayer and reading the Holy Scriptures, make your atten-

tion upon the worship of God give place to your carnal indulgences and to your worldly interests, and are almost as ignorant and careless, as to every thing that concerns the salvation of your never-dying soul, as a poor, unenlightened heathen.

Ah, poor sinner! humiliating and affecting as this picture of human nature appears, is it not your own likeness? And is it really possible, is it actually true, that you have lived so many years to so little purpose, and that in a Christian country, surrounded with the light of revelation, and the faithful preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—nay, more, professing yourself to be a Christian, and to have a hope of eternal life?

Feeling a love for your perishing soul, and desirous of doing you good, I would speak plainly and faithfully to you of the things which concern your present and eternal good. Know, then, that you are an offender against God. You have broken his righteous law, insulted his gracious perfections, and are in debt to him more than ten thousand talents. The law of God condemns you; the justice of God claims satisfaction at your hand; and the word of God thus addresses you: "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup." Awful considerations! Only a step between you and death; only a step between you and hell; and still you linger in the plains of Sodom, in the path of sin; and, folding your hands together, you lull your conscience to sleep, by promising that to-morrow you will seriously think of God, your soul, and eternity. Hear what God says: "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Prov. 27: 1. Thousands have been thus deluded, and come short of salvation, through the stratagems of Satan. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

What is that I hear? Is it a sigh from the heart awakened to feel its guilt? What is that I see? Is it the tear of repentance flowing down the withered cheek? Whither are you going, aged sinner? Are you going to bend your knee to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and are you going, in the spirit and language of the prodigal, thus to address God: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants?" Luke 15: 18, 19. Is this the thought, is this the purpose and determination of your heart? Well, then, arise and go, and God himself will receive you! Hear his kind and gracious language: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isaiah 55: 6, 7.

Are you discouraged? Does your conscience, acting the part of an accusing witness, rise up against you? Does it say that you are an old sinner; that your sins are many and great; that they have been committed against such light, against such distinct and frequent calls of God, that the aggravations thereof have exceeded those of any sinner you ever knew, or of whom you ever heard? Is this true? Then plead guilty to the charge; throw yourself upon the mercy of the King of grace. He "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3: 16. Jesus Christ himself says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He is both able and willing to save the greatest of sinners; his blood cleanseth from all sin; he has saved sinners as vile and miserable as you; he has brought back wandering

souls from the very gates of hell; look unto him; trust in him as your "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Look to the word of God, which says, "Come," now, just as you are: "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. 1: 18. Thus the word of God answers every objection, and should consequently remove your fears, and encourage you to cast your guilty soul at his feet, saying, "If I perish, it shall be here, looking to, and trusting in Jesus to pardon and to save me."

But it may be this Tract has fallen into the hands of a real Christian, whose hoary hairs are found in the way of righteousness. Venerable servant of the most high God, suffer the word of exhortation, while I congratulate you as one highly favored of the Lord. I desire to be a helper of your faith and joy; I would call upon you to go up, yea, I would fain accompany you to Mount Pisgah, to view the land of promise; may the Lord enable you, as you approach the hour of your last conflict, to imbibe the spirit, and use the exulting language of the Psalmist: "My flesh and my heart faileth me; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

I have only now to remind you of the prospect which is opening to your view, and encourage you to fix your attention upon it with a calm and joyful frame of mind. Death, judgment, and eternity, are at the door; your race is nearly run, you are already on the banks of Jordan; and not many days hence, peradventure, Jesus will beckon you over. How do you feel under your present circumstances? I hope you do not regret that you are so near the end of your pilgrimage, nor yet feel alarmed at its concluding scene. Many have groaned in bondage for years, under an appre-

hension of the storms and tempests they should have to encounter on the passage. Instead of which, the sky has been serene, the waters perfectly smooth. Jesus has taken them by the hand and gently led them through; and as they went, enabled them to sing, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" 1 Cor. 15: 55. Turn over the sacred pages, aged believer, and see how the saints of God have died in times past. You will there read that they have found grace and strength equal to their time of need.

When the time of Jacob's departure approached, with how much calmness did he anticipate the event! Sending for his children, he advised, admonished, and blessed them; conversed with them freely about his death and burial, and instead of lamenting that his hour was come, he rejoiced at it, as a period he had long desired, saying, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord."

When the Lord said unto Moses, "Get thee up into this mountain Abiram, unto Mount Nebo, and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession, and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother died in Mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people," Moses uttered not a single murmur; he asked no respite from the sentence, but yielded a prompt obedience to his heavenly Father's will, and with a firm step, and a placid mind, walked up to the appointed place, looked with high satisfaction at the promised land, and was gathered to his fathers in peace.

One instance more claims your attention, my aged friend: it is that of the apostle Paul, who, in the immediate expectation of sealing with his blood the doctrines he had preached, discloses the feelings of his mind on the near prospect of that trying hour. What a lovely scene does this

part of sacred history exhibit! What an enviable man is the Christian hero! He is every hour expecting to be put to death by the hands of cruel persecutors, and yet he not only alludes to the circumstance with calmness and fortitude, but makes it the subject of exultation and triumph, and in a strongly impassioned and inimitable strain of eloquence exclaims, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." 2 Tim. 4 : 6, 7, 8.

Remember, aged Christian, that God, who supported them in the hour of death, is also your God and Father. The same Jesus, whose presence and grace strengthened them, is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." That gracious Spirit, whose light and comfort cheered their passage through the dark valley, is also in and with every other true believer: take, then, as your motto, the animating language of the Psalmist, "This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."

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No. 49.

THE

CONVERSION

OF

REV. JOHN COWPER.

BY WILLIAM COWPER,

AUTHOR OF "THE TASK."

TRANSCRIBED AND PUBLISHED

BY

REV. JOHN NEWTON.

WITH A BRIEF MEMOIR OF THE WRITER.

William Cowper, Esq., a son of the Rev. John Cowper, D. D., was born November 15, 1731. Descended from amiable and respectable parents, of noble affinity, and connected with persons of great worldly influence, his prospects of advancement in temporal affluence and honor were flattering, and he was early sent to Westminster school, to enter upon that course of study which it was designed he should complete at the university. From childhood, however, his mind was very tender, and his spirits often dejected; and in this school the natural timidity of his temper so much depressed him, that his friends relinquished the plan of sending him to Oxford, and he was permitted to prosecute his studies in a more private manner. He was directed to the

profession of Law, and in his thirty-first year was strenuously urged to accept the office of clerk in the House of Lords; but no persuasion could overcome his aversion to public life. He suffered much from the importunity of his friends, until, convinced of the folly of any longer persisting against nature and inclination, they at length gave over their entreaties, and permitted him to retire into that seclusion, the desire of which was the ruling passion of his heart.

In all these bitter trials, which drove him almost to despair and insanity, and caused him even to attempt to take away his own life, Mr. Cowper was destitute of the consolations of the Gospel; but it was at this crisis, that his serious attention to religion appears to have commenced. His mind was now, for the first time, convinced of the evil of sin, as a transgression against God. Instead of finding relief in reading, every book he opened seemed to him adapted to increase his distress, which became so pungent as to deprive him of his usual rest, and to render his broken slumbers equally miserable with his waking hours. While in this state, his relative, the Rev. Martin Madan, visited him, and set before him the atonement and righteousness of Christ, as the remedy which his case required; and the necessity of faith in Him, in order to experience the blessings of His salvation. These important truths seemed to afford him a temporary source of consolation; but he soon sunk again into melancholy and despair, from which he found no relief, till he was directed by the Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Rom. 3 : 25. While meditating on this passage, he obtained a clear view of the Gospel, which was attended with unspeakable joy. Many of his subsequent days were occupied with praise and prayer, and his heart overflowed with love to his

crucified Redeemer. It was under these delightful impressions, that he wrote the beautiful hymn entitled, *The Happy Change*.

Having determined to renounce his profession of the law, he retired to Huntingdon; and after two or three years, removed to Olney, where he contracted a most intimate friendship with the Rev. John Newton; and indulged, amidst rural scenes, those religious pleasures and occupations which experience had taught him to value far above all that the polite or busy world could afford. "Divine Providence," says Mr. Newton, "evidently preparing his way and marking out his retreat, he retired into the country; and thus the good hand of God, unknown to me, was providing for me one of the principal blessings of my life—a friend and a counsellor, in whose company, for almost seven years, though we were seldom seven successive waking hours absent from each other, I always found new pleasure —a friend, who was not only a comfort to myself, but a blessing to the affectionate poor people, among whom I then lived. He loved the poor, he often visited them in their cottages, conversed with them in the most condescending manner, sympathized with them, counselled and comforted them in their distresses; and those who were seriously disposed were often cheered and animated by his prayers!"

Mr. Cowper's walk with God in private was consistent with the solemnity and fervor of his social engagements. Like the prophet Daniel, and the royal Psalmist, he "kneeled three times a day and prayed, and gave thanks before his God," in retirement, besides the regular practice of domestic worship. His mind was stayed on God; and for an unusual number of years, it was kept almost in perfect peace. The corrupt dispositions which have so strong a hold upon the human heart, appeared to be peculiarly suppressed in him; and when in any degree felt, they were lamented and

resisted. While his attainments in the love of God were thus eminent, his Christian love to fellow-believers, and to all around him, was highly exemplary. To a conduct void of offence to any individual, and marked with peculiar kindness to all who feared God, was added a beneficence fully proportioned to his ability, and exercised with the greatest modesty and discretion.

The consolation which, after having endured the severest distress, he at that time derived from a life of faith in the Son of God, who "loved him and gave himself for him," he thus describes, in an affecting allegory:

> "I was a stricken deer, that left the herd
> Long since. With many an arrow, deep infixed,
> My panting side was charged; when I withdrew
> To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
> There was I found by One who had himself
> Been hurt by th' archers. In his side he bore,
> And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars.
> With gentle force soliciting the darts,
> He drew them forth, and heal'd, and bade me live."
>
> The Task, Book 3.

The degree and the uninterrupted duration of his spiritual comforts had, perhaps, exceeded the usual experience of pious people; but the bright, yet serene lustre which had marked his road, was at length succeeded by impenetrable darkness. "Of nearly *twelve* years," says Mr. Newton, in a manuscript left behind him at his death, "the first six I passed in daily admiring, and aiming to imitate him; during the second six I walked pensively with him in the valley of the shadow of death." Yet he did not murmur, but ever cherished an unshaken submission to what he imagined the Divine will.

The principal pleasure that he appeared capable of receiving was that which he derived from the happiness of

others. Instead of being provoked to discontent and envy, by contrasting their comforts with his own afflictions, there evidently was not a benefit that he knew to be enjoyed by others, which did not afford him sensible satisfaction; not a suffering endured, that did not add to his pain. The advancement of the knowledge of Christ in the world at large, was always near his heart; and whatever concerned the general welfare of mankind was interesting to him, secluded as he was from religious society. In like manner, from his distant retreat, he viewed, with painful sensations, the progress of infidelity and sin in every shape. His love to God, though unassisted by a cheerful hope of divine favor, was invariably manifested by an abhorrence of every thing that he thought dishonorable to the Most High, and a delight in all that tended to his glory.

After declining for several months, on the 25th of April, 1800, in the sixty-ninth year of his age, he was happily released from this scene of suffering and sorrow. He passed through the moments of death so mildly, that although five persons were present, and observing him, not one of them perceived him to expire; but he ceased to breathe about five minutes before five in the afternoon.

SKETCH

OF THE

LIFE OF THE REV. JOHN COWPER.

As soon as it had pleased God, after a long and sharp season of conviction, to visit me with the consolations of his grace, it became one of my chief concerns, that my relations might be made partakers of the same mercy. In the first letter I wrote to my brother, I took occasion to declare what God had done for my soul; and am not conscious, that, from that period down to his last illness, I wilfully neglected an opportunity of engaging him, if it were possible, in conversation of a spiritual kind. When I left St. Albans, and went to visit him at Cambridge, my heart being full of the subject, I poured it out before him without reserve; and in all my subsequent intercourse with him, so far as I was enabled, took care to show that I had received, not merely a set of notions, but a real impression of the truths of the Gospel.

At first I found him ready enough to talk with me upon these subjects; sometimes he would dispute, but always without heat or animosity, and sometimes would endeavor to reconcile our sentiments, by supposing that, at the bottom, we were both of a mind, and meant the same thing.

He was a man of a most candid and ingenuous spirit;*

*——I had a brother once—
Peace to the mem'ry of a man of worth,
A man of letters, and of manners too—
Of manners sweet as Virtue always wears
When gay good-nature dresses her in smiles.
He grac'd a college in which order yet
Was sacred; and was honor'd, lov'd, and wept
By more than one, themselves conspicuous there.

The Task, Book 2

his temper remarkably sweet; and in his behavior to me, he had always manifested an uncommon affection. His outward conduct, so far as it fell under my notice, or I could learn it by the report of others, was perfectly decent and unblamable. There was nothing vicious in any part of his practice; but being of a studious, thoughtful turn, he placed his chief delight in the acquisition of learning, and made such acquisitions in it, that he had but few rivals in that of a classical kind. He was critically skilled in the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages; was beginning to make himself master of the Syriac, and perfectly understood the French and Italian, the latter of which he could speak fluently. These attainments, however, he lived heartily to despise, not as useless when sanctified and employed in the service of God, but when sought after for their own sake, and with a view to the praise of men. He was easy and cheerful in his conversation, and entirely free from the stiffness which is generally contracted by men devoted to such pursuits.

Thus we spent about two years, conversing as occasion offered—and we generally visited each other once or twice a week, as long as I continued at Huntingdon—upon the leading truths of the Gospel. By this time, he began to be more reserved; he would hear me patiently, but never reply; and this I found, upon his own confession afterwards, was the effect of a resolution he had taken, in order to avoid disputes, and to secure the continuance of that peace which had always subsisted between us. When our family removed to Olney, our intercourse became less frequent. We exchanged an annual visit, and whenever he came among us, he observed the same conduct, conformed to all our customs, attended family worship with us, heard the preaching, and received civilly whatever passed in conversation upon the subject, but adhered strictly to the rule he had

prescribed to himself, never remarking upon, or objecting to any thing he heard or saw. This, through the goodness of his natural temper, he was enabled to carry so far, that though some things unavoidably happened, which we feared would give him offence, he never took any; for it was not possible to offer him the pulpit, nor when Mr. N—— was with us once, at the time of family prayer, could we ask my brother to officiate, though being himself a minister, and one of our own family for the time, the office seemed naturally to fall into his hands.

In September, 1769, I learned by letters from Cambridge, that he was dangerously ill. I set out for that place the day after I received them, and found him as ill as I expected. He had taken cold on his return from a journey into Wales, and lest he should be laid up at a distance from home, had pushed forward as fast as he could from Bath, with a fever upon him. Soon after his arrival at Cambridge, he discharged, unknown to himself, such a prodigious quantity of blood, that the physician ascribed it only to the strength of his constitution that he was still alive, and assured me, that if the discharge should be repeated, he must inevitably die upon the spot. In this state of imminent danger, he seemed to have no more concern about his spiritual interests than when in perfect health. His couch was strewed with volumes of plays, to which he had frequent recourse for amusement. I learned, indeed, afterwards, that, even at this time, the thoughts of God and eternity would often force themselves upon his mind; but not apprehending his life to be in danger, and trusting in the morality of his past conduct, he found it no difficult matter to thrust them out again.

As it pleased God that he had no relapse, he presently began to recover strength, and in ten days' time I left him so far restored, that he could ride many miles without fa-

tigue, and had every symptom of returning health. It is probable, however, that though his recovery seemed perfect, this illness was the means which God had appointed to bring down his strength in the midst of his journey, and to hasten on the malady which proved his last.

On the 16th of February, 1770, I was again summoned to attend him, by letters which represented him as so ill, that the physician entertained but little hopes of his recovery. He, however, expressed great joy at seeing me, thought himself much better than he had been, and seemed to flatter himself with hopes that he should be well again. My situation at this time was truly distressful. I learned from the physician that, in this instance, as in the last, he was in much greater danger than he suspected. He did not seem to lay his illness at all to heart, nor could I find by his conversation that he had one serious thought. As often as a suitable occasion offered, when we were free from company and interruption, I endeavored to give a spiritual turn to the discourse; and the day after my arrival, asked his permission to pray with him, to which he readily consented. I renewed my attempts in this way as often as I could, though without any apparent success; still he seemed as careless and unconcerned as ever; yet I could not but consider his willingness in this instance as a token for good, and observed with pleasure, that though at other times he discovered no marks of seriousness, yet when I spoke to him of the Lord's dealings with myself, he received what I said with affection, would press my hand and look kindly at me, and seemed to love me the better for it.

On the 21st of the same month, he had a violent fit of the asthma, which seized him when he rose, about an hour before noon, and lasted all the day. His agony was dreadful. Having never seen any person afflicted in the same way, I could not help fearing that he would be suffocated;

nor was the physician himself without fears of the same kind. This day the Lord was very present with me, and enabled me, as I sat by the poor sufferer's side, to wrestle for a blessing upon him.

I observed to him, that though it had pleased God to visit him with great afflictions, yet mercy was mingled with the dispensation. I said, "You have many friends, who love you and are willing to do all they can to serve you; and so perhaps have others in the like circumstances; but it is not the lot of every sick man, how much soever he may be beloved, to have a friend that can pray for him." He replied, "That is true, and I hope God will have mercy upon me." His love for me from this time became very remarkable; there was a tenderness in it more than was merely natural; and he generally expressed it by calling for blessings upon me in the most affectionate terms, and with a look and manner not to be described.

Through the whole of this most painful dispensation, he was blessed with a degree of patience and resignation to the will of God, not always seen in the behavior of established Christians under sufferings so great as his. I never heard a murmuring word escape him; on the contrary, he would often say, when his pains were most acute, "I only wish it may please God to enable me to suffer without complaining; I have no right to complain." Once he said with a loud voice, "Let thy rod and thy staff support and comfort me: and oh, that it were with me as in times past, when the candle of the Lord shone upon my tabernacle." One evening, when I had been expressing my hope that the Lord would show him mercy, he replied, "I hope he will; I am sure I pretend to nothing." Many times he spoke of himself in terms of the greatest self-abasement, which I cannot now particularly remember. I thought I could discern in these expressions the glimpses of approaching day, and have no

doubt at present but that the Spirit of God was gradually preparing him, in a way of true humiliation, for that bright display of Gospel grace which he was soon after pleased to afford him.*

On Saturday, the tenth of March, about three in the afternoon, he suddenly burst into tears, and said with a loud cry, "Oh, forsake me not!" I went to his bedside, when he grasped my hand, and presently, by his eyes and countenance, I found that he was in prayer. Then turning to me, he said, "Oh, brother, I am full of what I could say to you." The nurse asked him if he would have any hartshorn or lavender. He replied, "None of these things will serve my purpose." I said, "But I know what would, my dear, don't I?" He answered, "You do, brother."

Having continued some time silent, he said, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;" then, after a pause, "Ay, and he is able to do it, too."

I left him for about an hour, fearing lest he should fatigue himself with talking, and because my surprise and joy were so great that I could hardly bear them. When I returned, he threw his arms about my neck, and leaning his head against mine, he said, "Brother, if I live, you and I shall be more like one another than we have been. But whether I live or not, all is well, and will be so; I know it will; I have felt that which I never felt before, and am sure that God has visited me with this sickness to teach me what I was too proud to learn in health. I never had satisfaction till now. The doctrines I had been used to, referred me to MYSELF for the foundation of my hopes, and there I could find nothing to rest upon. The sheet-anchor of the soul was wanting. I thought you wrong, yet wished to believe

* There is a beautiful illustration of this sudden and happy change, in Mr. Cowper's poem, entitled HOPE.

"As when a felon whom his country's laws," etc.

as you did. I found myself unable to believe, yet always thought that I should one day be brought to do so. You suffered more than I have done before you believed these truths; but our sufferings, though different in their kind and measure, were directed to the same end. I hope he has taught me that which he teaches none but his own. I hope so. These things were foolishness to me once, but now I have a firm foundation, and am satisfied."

In the evening, when I went to bid him good night, he looked steadfastly in my face, and with great solemnity in his air and manner, taking me by the hand, resumed the discourse in these very words: "As empty, and yet full; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things—I see the rock upon which I once split, and I see the Rock of my salvation. I have peace in myself, and if I live, I hope it will be that I may be made a messenger of peace to others. I have learned *that* in a moment, which I could not have learned by reading many books for many years. I have often studied these points, and studied them with great attention, but was blinded by prejudice; and unless he who alone is worthy to unloose the seals had opened the book to me, I had been blinded still. Now they appear so plain, that though I am convinced no comment could ever have made me understand them, I wonder I did not see them before. Yet great as my doubts and difficulties were, they have only served to pave the way, and being solved, they make it plainer. The light I have received comes late, but it is a comfort to me that I never made the Gospel truths a subject of ridicule. Though I dissented from the persuasion and the ways of God's people, I ever thought them respectable, and therefore not proper to be made a jest of. The evil I suffer is the consequence of my descent from the corrupt original stock, and of my own personal transgressions; the good I enjoy comes to me as the overflowing of his bounty;

but the crown of all his mercies is this, that he has given me a Saviour, and not only the Saviour of mankind, brother, but *my* Saviour.

"I should delight to see the people at Olney, but am not worthy to appear among them." He wept at speaking these words, and repeated them with emphasis. "I should rejoice in an hour's conversation with Mr. Newton, and if I live, shall have much discourse with him upon these subjects, but am so weak in body, that at present I could not bear it."

At the same time he gave me to understand, that he had been five years inquiring after the truth; that is, from the time of my first visit to him after I left St. Albans; and that, from the very day of his ordination, which was ten years ago, he had been dissatisfied with his own views of the Gospel, and sensible of their defect and obscurity; that he had always had a sense of the importance of the ministerial charge, and had used to consider himself accountable for his doctrine no less than his practice; that he could appeal to the Lord for his sincerity in all that time, and had never wilfully erred, but always been desirous of coming to the knowledge of the truth. He added, that the moment when he sent forth that cry,* was the moment when light was darted into his soul; that he had thought much about these things in the course of his illness, but never till that instant was able to understand them.

It was remarkable, that from the very instant when he was first enlightened, he was also wonderfully strengthened in body, so that from the 10th to the 14th of March we all entertained hopes of his recovery. He was himself very sanguine in his expectations of it, but frequently said that his desire for recovery extended no farther than his hope of

* On the 10th of March. See page 11.

usefulness; adding, "Unless I may live to be an instrument of good to others, it were better for me to die now."

As his assurance was clear and unshaken, so he was very sensible of the goodness of the Lord to him in that respect. On the day when his eyes were opened, he turned to me, and in a low voice said, "What a mercy it is to a man in my condition to *know* his acceptance; I am completely satisfied of mine." On another occasion, speaking to the same purpose, he said, "This bed would be a bed of misery, and it is so; but it is likewise a bed of joy, and a bed of discipline. Were I to die this night, I know I should be happy. This assurance I hope is quite consistent with the word of God. It is built upon a sense of my own utter insufficiency, and the all-sufficiency of Christ." At the same time, he said, "Brother, I have been building my glory upon a sandy foundation; I have labored night and day to perfect myself in things of no profit; I have sacrificed my health to these pursuits, and am now suffering the consequence of my misspent labor. But how contemptible do the writers I once highly valued now appear to me. 'Yea, doubtless, I count all things loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.' I must now go to a new school. I have many things to learn. I succeeded in my former pursuits. I wanted to be highly applauded; and I was so. I was flattered up to the height of my wishes: now I must learn a new lesson."

On the evening of the 13th, he said, "What comfort have I in this bed, miserable as I seem to be! Brother, I love to look at you. I see now who was right, and who was mistaken. But it seems wonderful, that such a dispensation should be necessary to enforce what seems so very plain. I wish myself at Olney; you have a good river there, better than all the rivers of Damascus. What a scene is passing before me! Ideas upon these subjects crowd

upon me faster than I can give them utterance. How plain do many texts appear, to which, after consulting all the commentators, I could hardly affix a meaning: and now I have their true meaning without any comment at all. There is but one key to the New Testament; there is but one interpreter. I cannot describe to you, nor shall ever be able to describe, what I felt in the moment when it was given to me. May I make a good use of it! How I shudder when I think of the danger I have just escaped! I had made up my mind upon these subjects, and was determined to hazard all upon the justness of my own opinions."

His remarkable amendment soon appeared to be no more than a present supply of strength and spirits, that he might be able to speak of the better life which God had given him, which was no sooner done than he relapsed as suddenly as he had revived. It was his earnest desire to bear an open testimony in favor of the truth, the power of which he had experienced; and to profess his cordial belief in the doctrines of the Reformation, and of the church in the communion of which he lived and died, in presence of those who had been strangers to the change which had taken place in his sentiments. But his strength declining apace, and his pains becoming more severe, he could never find a proper opportunity. His experience was rather peace than joy, if a distinction may be made between joy and that heart-felt peace which he often spoke of in the most comfortable terms; and which he expressed by a heavenly smile upon his countenance under the bitterest bodily distress. His words upon this subject once were these: "How wonderful is it that God should look upon man, especially that he should look upon *me!* Yet he sees me, and takes notice of all that I suffer. I see him too; he is present before me, and I hear him say, '*Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*'"

On the 14th, in the afternoon, I perceived that the strength and spirits which had been afforded him were suddenly withdrawn, so that by the next day his mind became weak, and his speech roving and faltering. But still, at intervals, he was enabled to speak of divine things with great force and clearness. On the evening of the 15th, he said, "'There is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.' That text has been sadly misunderstood by me, as well as by others. Where is that just person to be found? Alas! what must have become of me, if I had died this day sennight? What should I have had to plead? My own righteousness! *That* would have been of great service to me, to be sure! Well, whither next? Why, to the mountains to fall upon us, and to the hills to cover us. I am not duly thankful for the mercy I have received. Perhaps I may ascribe some part of my insensibility to my great weakness of body. I hope at least, that, if I was better in health, it would be better with me in these respects also."

The next day, perceiving that his understanding began to suffer by the extreme weakness of his body, he said, "I have been vain of my understanding, and of my acquirements in this place; and now, God has made me little better than an idiot, as much as to say, Now be proud, if you can. Well, while I have any senses left, my thoughts will be poured out in the praise of God. I have an interest in Christ, in his blood and sufferings, and my sins are forgiven me. Have I not cause to praise him? When my understanding fails me quite, as I think it will soon, then he will pity my weakness."

Though the Lord intended that his warfare should be short, yet a warfare he was to have, and to be exposed to a measure of conflict with his own corruptions. His pain

being extreme, his powers of recollection much impaired, and the Comforter withholding for a season his sensible support, he was betrayed into a fretfulness and impatience of spirit, which had never been permitted to show itself before. This appearance alarmed me, and having an opportunity afforded me by every one's absence, I said to him, "You were happier last Saturday than you are to-day. Are you entirely destitute of the consolations you then spoke of? And, do you not sometimes feel comfort flowing into your heart from a sense of your acceptance with God?" He replied, "Sometimes I do, but sometimes I am left to desperation." The same day, in the evening, he said, "Brother, I believe you are often uneasy, lest what lately past should come to nothing." I replied by asking him whether, when he found his patience and his temper fail, he endeavored to pray for power against his corruptions. He answered, "Yes, a thousand times in a day. But I see myself odiously vile, and wicked. If I die in this illness, I beg you will place no other inscription over me than such as may just mention my name, and the parish where I was minister; for that I ever had a being, and what sort of a being I had, cannot be too soon forgotten. I was just beginning to be a Deist, and had long desired to be so; and I will own to you, what I never confessed before, that my function, and the duties of it, were a weariness to me which I could not bear. Yet, wretched creature and beast as I was, I was esteemed religious, though I lived without God in the world." About this time I reminded him of the account of Janeway's which he once read at my desire. He said he had laughed at it in his own mind, and accounted it mere madness and folly. "Yet, base as I am," said he, "I have no doubt now but God has accepted me also, and forgiven me all my sins."

I then asked him what he thought of my narrative. He

replied, "I thought it strange, and ascribed much of it to the state which you have been in. When I came to visit you in London, and found you in that deep distress, I would have given the universe to have administered some comfort to you. You may remember that I tried every method of doing it. When I found that all my attempts were vain, I was shocked to the greatest degree. I began to consider your sufferings as a judgment upon you, and my inability to alleviate them as a judgment upon myself. When Mr. M. came, he succeeded in a moment. This surprised me; but it does not surprise me now. He had the key to your heart, which I had not. That which filled me with disgust against my office, as a minister, was the same ill success which attended me in my own parish. There I endeavored to soothe the afflicted, and to reform the unruly by warning and reproof; but all that I could say in either case was spoken to the wind, and attended with no effect."

There is that in the nature of salvation by grace, when it is truly and experimentally known, which prompts every person to think himself the most extraordinary instance of its power. Accordingly, my brother insisted upon the precedence in this respect, and upon comparing his case with mine, would by no means allow my deliverance to have been so wonderful as his own. He observed that, "from the beginning, both his manner of life and his connections had been such as had a natural tendency to blind his eyes, and to confirm and rivet his prejudice against the truth. Blameless in his outward conduct, and having no open immorality to charge himself with, his acquaintance had been with men of the same stamp, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised the doctrines of the cross. Such were all, whom, from his earliest days, he had been used to propose to himself as patterns for his imitation."

His thoughts, I suppose, had been led to this subject,

when, one afternoon, while I was writing by the fireside, he thus addressed himself to the nurse, who sat at his bolster. "Nurse, I have lived three-and-thirty years, and I will tell you how I have spent them: When I was a boy, they taught me Latin; and because I was the son of a gentleman, they taught me Greek. These I learned under a sort of private tutor. At the age of fourteen, or thereabouts, they sent me to a public school, where I learned more Latin and Greek; and, last of all, to this place, where I have been learning more Latin and Greek still! Now, has not this been a blessed life, and much to the glory of God!" Then directing his speech to me, he said, "Brother, I was going to say I was born in such a year; but I correct myself: I would rather say, in such a year I came into the world. You know when I was born."

As long as he expected to recover, the souls committed to his care were much upon his mind. One day, when none was present but myself, he prayed thus: "Oh Lord, thou art good; goodness is thy very essence, and thou art the fountain of wisdom! I am a poor worm, weak and foolish as a child. Thou hast entrusted many souls unto me; and I have not been able to teach them, because I knew thee not myself. Grant me ability, oh Lord, for I can do nothing without thee, and give me grace to be faithful."

In a time of severe and continued pain, he smiled in my face, and said, "Brother, I am as happy as a king." And the day before he died, when I asked him what sort of a night he had had, he replied, "A sad night, not a wink of sleep." I said, "Perhaps, though, your mind has been composed, and you have been enabled to pray." "Yes," said he, "I have endeavored to spend the hours in the thoughts of God and prayer; I have been much comforted, and all the comfort I got, came to me in this way."

The next morning I was called up to be witness of his last moments. I found him in a deep sleep, lying perfectly still, and seemingly free from pain. I staid with him till they pressed me to quit the room, and in about five minutes after I left him, he died; sooner, indeed, than I expected, though, for some days, there had been no hopes of his recovery. His death at that time was rather extraordinary; at least, I thought it so; for when I took leave of him the night before, he did not seem worse nor weaker than he had been, and for aught that appeared, might have lasted many days; but the Lord, in whose sight the death of his saints is precious, cut short his sufferings, and gave him a speedy and peaceful departure.

He died at seven in the morning, on the 20th of March, 1770.

"Thou art the source and centre of all minds,
Their only point of rest, ETERNAL WORD!
From THEE departing they are lost, and rove
At random, without honor, hope, or peace.
From THEE is all that soothes the life of man,
His high endeavor and his glad success,
His strength to suffer, and his will to serve.
But, Oh! thou bounteous Giver of all good,
Thou art of all thy gifts thyself the crown.
Give what thou canst, without thee we are poor;
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away."

The Task, Book 5

THE

SWEARER'S PRAYER,

OR

HIS OATH EXPLAINED.

What, a swearer pray! Yes, swearer, whether thou thinkest so or not, each of thine oaths is a prayer—an appeal to the holy and Almighty God, whose name thou darest so impiously to take into thy lips.

And what is it, thinkest thou, swearer, that thou dost call for, when the awful imprecations, *damn* and *damnation*, roll so frequently from thy profane tongue? Tremble, swearer, while I tell thee! Thy prayer containeth two parts: thou prayest, First, that thou mayest be deprived of eternal happiness! Secondly, that thou mayest be plunged into eternal misery!

When, therefore, thou callest for damnation, dost thou not, in effect, say as follows: "O God! thou hast power to punish me in hell for ever: therefore, let not one of my sins be forgiven! Let every oath I have sworn—every lie that I have told—every Sabbath that I have broken—and all the sins that I have committed, either in thought, word, or deed, rise up in judgment against me, and eternally condemn me! Let me never partake of thy salvation! May my soul and body be deprived of all happiness, both in this world and that which is to come! Let me never see thy face with comfort—never enjoy thy favor and friendship; and let me never enter into the kingdom of heaven!"

This is the first part of thy prayer. Let us hear the second.

"O God, let me not only be shut out of heaven, but also shut up in hell! May all the members of my body be tor-

tured with inconceivable agony, and all the powers of my soul tormented with horror and despair, inexpressible and eternal! Let my dwelling be in the blackness of darkness, and my companions accursed men and accursed devils! Pour down thy hottest anger; execute all thy wrath and curse upon me; arm and send forth all thy terrors against me; and let thy fierce, thy fiery, thy fearful indignation rest upon me! Be mine eternal enemy, and plague, and punish, and torment me, in hell, for ever, and ever, and ever!"

Swearer, *this is thy prayer!* O, dreadful imprecation! O, horrible, horrible, most horrible! Blaspheming man! dost thou like thy petition? Look at it. Art thou sincere in thy prayer, or art thou *mocking* thy Maker? Dost thou wish for damnation? Art thou desirous of eternal torment? If so, swear on—swear hard. The more oaths the more misery; and, perhaps, the sooner thou mayest be in hell. Art thou *shocked* at this language? Does it harrow up thy soul? Does the very blood run cold in thy veins? Art thou convinced of the evil of profane swearing? How many times hast thou blasphemed the God of heaven? How many times hast thou asked God to damn thee in the course of a year, a month, a day? Nay, how many times in a single hour hast thou called for damnation? Art thou not yet in hell? Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth, at the goodness and long-suffering of that God whose great name swearing persons so often and so awfully profane! Swearer, be thankful, O, be exceedingly thankful, that God has not answered thy prayer, thy *tremendous* prayer; that his mercy and patience have withholden the request of thy polluted lips! Never let him hear another oath from thy unhallowed tongue, lest it should be thy last expression upon earth, and thy swearing prayer should be answered in hell. O, let thine oaths be turned into supplications! Repent and turn to Jesus, who died for swearers as well as his murderers: and then, O then, though thou mayest have sworn as many oaths as there are "stars in the heavens, and sands upon the seashore, innumerable," then thou shalt find, to thy eternal joy, that there is love enough in his heart, and merit sufficient in his blood, to pardon thy sins, and to save thy soul for ever. Swearer, canst thou ever again blaspheme such a God and Saviour as this? Does not thy conscience cry, *God forbid?* Even so, Amen.

THE PRAYER ANSWERED,

IN THE FOLLOWING AMONG MULTITUDES OF OTHER INSTANCES.

In November, 1786, a person much given to swearing, being disappointed by one of his companions not returning to the public-house as soon as he expected, *swore* he would never drink with him again, and that if he did, it should be his *last.* Accordingly, that day *was* his last. God took him at his word, and thus called him into eternity.

In November, 1787, one W——rs, a smith, spending the evening at a public-house in Leather-lane, quarrelled with one of his companions; and while *swearing* the most horrid oaths, God struck him instantaneously dead, with an oath on his lips, upon the bench where he was sitting. The jury who sat upon the body, after hearing all the circumstances of the case, brought in their verdict, that "*W——rs was struck dead as a judgment from God.*" This narration was given by the foreman of the jury.

Another remarkable judgment overtook a person living in Brewer-street, Soho, who, cursing and swearing in a most dreadful manner, was struck speechless, and died the same afternoon. Will's Register.

In the year 1806, Joseph Shepherd, an inhabitant of Bledlow, in the county of Bucks, remarkable for his depravity, drunkenness, profane cursing and swearing, and contempt of the Gospel, was offered a pint of ale upon condition of his damning the Methodists. This proposal was so agreeable to his own wicked inclinations and habits, that he readily complied with it, and received the promised reward. But a more dreadful recompense was at hand! On Wednesday, October 1st, he was repeating, at a public-house, his wishes for the damnation of those religious persons generally called Methodists, with horrid oaths, too shocking to be expressed, when in about two hours afterwards it pleased God suddenly to strike him with a mortal disease, which at its commencement deprived him of the use of his hands and feet, and progressed so rapidly as to put a period to his life on the Monday following. During the course of his illness he was greatly terrified with the expectation of approaching

death and judgment, and expressed himself thus: "I have no hope. I shall meet with no forgiveness. I have been a great sinner all my life, but the last week was worse than all my former days. Oh! if God would spare me a little longer, I would not go on as I have done."

T. G., who lived in the parish of Sedgely, near Wolverhampton, having lost a considerable sum at cock-fighting, to which practice he was notoriously addicted, swore, in a most horrid manner, that he would never fight another cock, frequently calling upon God to damn his soul to all eternity if he did; and, with dreadful imprecations, wishing the devil might fetch him, if ever he made another bet. His resolutions, thus impiously formed, were for a while observed; but about two years afterwards, Satan, whose willing servant he continued to be, inspired him with a violent desire to attend a cock-fighting at Wolverhampton, and he complied with the temptation. He there stood up and cried, "I hold four to three on such a cock." "Four what?" said one of his companions in iniquity. "Four shillings," replied he. Upon which the wager was confirmed, and he, putting his hand into his pocket for the money, *instantly fell a ghastly corpse on the ground.* Evang. Mag.

"Who hath hardened himself against God, and hath prospered?" Job 9 : 4.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Exod. 20 : 7.

"Because of swearing, the land mourneth." Jer. 23 : 10.

"Every one that sweareth shall be cut off." Zech. 5 : 3.

Dear reader, art thou a swearer? Oh! take this friendly warning: thy next oath may be thy last. If thy prayer is heard, thy soul is damned for ever!

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No. 51.

THE

MISERY OF THE LOST.

The soul of man is susceptible of an intense degree of unhappiness. Even in this world, much misery is experienced by many, though here there are alleviations, and, commonly, some hope of deliverance. But in the world to come, hope is a stranger; and there are there no alleviating circumstances.

The misery of the damned has by theologians been divided into that of loss and that of sense: the one produced by the loss of good possessed or once attainable, the other arising from the positive infliction of punishment. But though this distinction has a foundation as it relates to the cause of the sinner's misery, yet, as it regards the feeling itself, there is no reason for making any distinction. All misery is felt according to its nature and intensity, and therefore is pain of sense, or sensible pain, whatever may be its cause. So the question whether the fire of hell is a material fire, is of no importance; for if I feel a pang of misery, at any moment, it matters nothing whether it is produced by a material or immaterial, by a privative or positive cause.

Under the general name of misery, many species of suffering are included; all, however, agreeing in this, that the sensation is painful. The feeling of fear is a very painful emotion, but in its nature very different from remorse. Ex-

cessive pain, in our present state, may be experienced through the nerves of sensation; but even here these sufferings differ, not only in degree, but in kind. The headache, toothache, and lumbago, are all severe pains, but they are not the same; and these bodily pains differ exceedingly from the feelings of remorse, or despair.

Our capacity of pain seems to bear an exact proportion to our susceptibility of pleasure. Indeed, the same faculties and affections which are the sources of our happiness when the objects suited to them are possessed, become the causes of our misery, when deprived of those objects. By the same faculty we perceive the beauties and the deformities of objects; the same moral sense is the instrument of the most exalted and soul-satisfying pleasure, and of the most intolerable anguish of which the soul is capable. Every affection and appetite affords pleasure, when duly exercised on its proper object; but deprived of this, becomes a source of intense pain.

Though the nature of future misery to all lost souls is the same, yet the degree may differ to an extent which no man can estimate. Some divines have maintained that the future happiness of the righteous will be equal, as eternal life is the free gift of God; but none, I believe, have ever held that the punishment of the lost will be equal. The Scriptures abundantly teach, that every man will be judged according to the deeds done in the body; and as the sins of different individuals are immensely different in guilt, justice demands that their punishment should be proportioned to the demerit of the sinner. Our Saviour most explicitly teaches this doctrine, when he says, "That servant who knew his master's will, and prepared not himself, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he who knew not his mas-

ter's will, and yet committed things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes."

The guilt of sin is not measured merely, or principally, by the external act, but by the light and advantages enjoyed by some above others. The difference between sins against light and sins of ignorance, is a matter concerning which common sense gives a judgment consonant with the rule laid down by our Lord. It does not appear that the cities of Galilee, where Christ spent most of his time, and where he wrought most of his beneficent miracles, were remarkable for external acts of immorality; and yet their sins were greater than those of cities proverbial for their wickedness, and consequently their punishment would be greater. His words should never be forgotten: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day: therefore I say unto thee, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for this city."

These are words of awful import, and are as applicable to neglecters of the Gospel and impenitent sinners now, as to those devoted cities. Many, because their external conduct is decent and moral, persuade themselves that their punishment will be light; but, in view of the words cited above, it will be far more tolerable for the vilest of the heathen, than for them, if they continue in their impenitence and neglect of the great salvation. Certainly, Gospel-neglecters, however decent in their external behavior, will sink

very deep into the abyss of misery. Among these, however, there will be a great difference. Some, alas, who sinned malignantly against light, will sink to the lowest gulf in hell.

To describe the extreme misery of lost souls is painful, both to the writer and the reader. If we should give way to our sympathies and compassionate feelings, we should not only exclude this awful subject from our discourses, but from our creed. Indeed, it must be acknowledged, that it occasions a conflict to reconcile our reason to the reality of such intense and interminable sufferings as are described in the word of God; and plausible arguments, derived from the goodness of God, might be constructed against the doctrine of so great future misery; but all such arguments would operate equally against the existence of sin and misery in this world, which, alas, are known too well to be facts which none can deny, and of which every individual is a witness.

When God speaks, reason and feeling should be silent. He knows what justice demands, and what can be done consistently with his attributes; but man is of yesterday, and knows nothing. Suppose a child, five or six years old, should undertake to sit in judgment on the acts of government, and to decide whether its penal laws were just or unjust, and whether capital punishments ought to be inflicted on murderers, or whether a war was just and necessary, who would expect a correct judgment from an infant? But such a child is better qualified to decide on the most complicated schemes of human policy, than man to judge of the propriety of the divine administration.

Impenitent men are apt to harden themselves against the awful denunciations of divine wrath contained in the

Bible, and to cherish unkind feelings towards the ministers who bring out plainly and authoritatively the doctrine of the New Testament, on this subject. And it cannot be denied, that some preachers denounce the terrors of the law against transgressors, in a style and manner adapted rather to irritate than to convince. They speak almost as if they took pleasure in these awful threatenings, and as if they had nothing to fear for themselves. No doubt many a zealous preacher has passed sentence on himself, and has actually suffered those torments which he denounced against others.

I am, therefore, disposed to present this subject in a light which cannot give offence. Instead of representing the danger to which others are exposed, I will make the case my own. It behooves me to "tremble at the word of the Lord," as much as others; and as I am a sinner, and therefore naturally subject to the penalty of the law, and liable to be misled by the deceitfulness of my heart to cherish false hopes, I will endeavor to realize to myself the feelings which I shall experience, if it should be my unhappy lot to die out of the favor of God.

It would seem that THE FIRST MOMENT AFTER DEATH must be one of unparalleled misery. My first reflection would be,

"I am lost for ever—all hope of happiness or relief is gone from my miserable soul. The blackness of darkness is round about me; no ray of light dawns on my wretched soul. Despair—fell despair, has now seized upon me, and must blacken every prospect to all eternity. While in the world, I could contrive to turn away my thoughts from the disagreeable subject; but now, my misery, like a heavy burden, presses on me, and is ever present—go where I will, do what I will.

"While in the body, and engaged in secular pursuits, I entertained a secret hope that there might be some mistake respecting the extreme misery of the damned, or that there might possibly be some way of e cape not revealed; but now, all these idle notions have fled like a dream when one awakes. I find hell to be no fable, but an awful reality. I find that the preachers, so far from exaggerating the misery of the lost, had no adequate conception of the wretchedness of a soul cast off from God for ever, and doomed to dwell in everlasting burnings. Oh horrible, horrible! I am then undone—for ever undone! In all former distresses, I could cry for mercy; but now I have passed beyond the reach of mercy!

"For the sake of momentary enjoyments, and worthless riches and honors, I have bartered away my soul. Accursed folly! What benefit can I now derive from those earthly pleasures and possessions? they only serve as fuel to the flames which consume me. Oh for one drop of water to cool my tongue. But for this I beg in vain. The time for prayer and for mercy has gone by, and my soul is lost, lost, lost! and through eternity I must expect no deliverance—no relief, nor even the slightest mitigation of my misery. Woe, woe, woe is me! It had been infinitely better for me never to have been born!

"If I had not enjoyed the offers of the Gospel, if pardon and reconciliation had not been within my reach, and often urged upon me, my anguish would not be so excruciating. But this it is which wrings my heart with unspeakable anguish, that I might have escaped all this misery. Had it not been for my own sin and folly, I might ere now have been in heaven. Others who heard the same sermons, and belonged to the same family, are now in Abraham's

bosom, while I am tormented in this flame. Oh that I could cease to be; but to fly from existence is impossible.

"Here, I am surrounded by wretches as miserable as myself, but their company rather aggravates than mitigates my soul's anguish. I am reproached and cursed by all who were ever led by my counsel or example into the ways of iniquity. They dreadfully scowl upon me.

"And the fiends of the pit, who were my seducers, now combine to taunt me with my folly. *They* never had the offers of mercy. The merits of a dying Saviour were never offered to them. They seem to entertain a malignant pleasure—if pleasure it can be called—in witnessing my extreme misery. Oh wretched man, whither can I flee? Is there no possible escape from this prison of despair? Can no one ever pass the gulf which separates this dismal abode from the regions of the blessed? None—none!

"Oh, if there could be a suicide of the soul, how happy should I be to escape from existence, and to plunge into the gulf of annihilation, which once seemed horrible to my apprehension, but now desirable. This would be an oblivion of all my misery. But in vain do I seek to die. Death flies from me. And here I see those deluded souls, who, by doing violence to their own lives, vainly dreamed that they were escaping from misery; but alas, from a burden which with faith and patience might have been borne, they have leaped into a fiery furnace. They are now convinced of the dreadful sin and folly of suicide; but they cannot repeat the act here.

"May I hope that time will lessen the horrors and anguish of my wretched soul? Will my heart, so susceptible of the emotions of bitter anguish, by degrees become less sensible to these piercing pains, and be more able to bear

up under this overwhelming weight of misery? This question can only be solved by experience: let me ask some one who has been suffering for thousands of years.

"Here comes Cain, the first murderer, who is known still by having upon him the stain of a brother's blood. Suppose I speak to him. Tell me, fellow-prisoner, who hast long endured the pains of this infernal prison, whether by long continuance these miseries become more tolerable? But why do I ask? the wretched fratricide is evidently writhing in keenest anguish. He is too miserable to speak, and too full of malignity to gratify any one. His guilty stain—the blood-spot—has not been burnt out by the fiercest fires of hell. No; see, he defies the Almighty. He blasphemes the God of heaven. He asks for no mitigation of his punishment now. His malignant, fiery spirit, feeds on despair, and challenges his Avenger to do his worst.

"Oh, then, I see there is a progression in wickedness, even in hell. This is the most appalling prospect of all—an endless progression in sin, and consequently an increase, instead of a diminution of misery, through the endless ages of eternity."

Another awful point in the existence of the damned, will be THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. Great as is the misery of a lost soul when separated from the body, this is probably small, when compared with the exceeding weight of misery which shall overtake it at the day of judgment. I must then endeavor to imagine what will be my feelings, if I should be found on the left hand on that dreadful day.

As here a large portion of our pleasures and pains are experienced through the body, I know no reason why it should not be so in the future world. Certainly, the dis-

embodied spirit is capable of none of these pains or pleasures. It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the bodies of the damned will be so constructed as to be inlets to excruciating pains, as the bodies of the saints will be instruments of refined, celestial pleasures. The person of the man is not complete without the body, and therefore the final sentence of condemnation will not be denounced, until the body—the self-same body—is raised from the dead, and reunited to the soul; that, having been partners in transgression, they may be associated in enduring the condign punishment of the deeds done in the body.

The state of the lost soul before the judgment, may be compared to that of a criminal confined in prison, waiting for his trial. Let me then imagine myself to have died unreconciled and impenitent. At an unexpected time the sound of the last trumpet will be heard; and as it is the last trumpet, so it will be the loudest. The departed spirits confined in prison shall hear it, and their bodies, long crumbled to dust, shall hear it; and I shall certainly hear that awful, deeply-penetrating sound, and I shall come forth, coerced by an irresistible power. I shall again be clothed with a body; but O, what sort of a body!

Among millions of millions I am forced to appear. Oh what terrible majesty in the Judge, now coming with all his holy angels—now seated on his great white throne. Awful moment! The books are opened. There all my crimes of thought, word, and deed, are recorded—sins of omission as well as commission. Oh for a hiding-place under the rocks or caves! But no; I must appear; I must hear my sentence of condemnation and banishment. The misery of an age seems condensed into this moment. The tremendous sentence comes forth, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,

prepared for the devil and his angels." Imagination fails—I can write no more; experience must teach the rest.

The misery of the eternally lost cannot be adequately conceived, much less expressed. It cannot be exaggerated by any description; and this will be manifest, if we consider

WHAT THEY KNOW THEY HAVE LOST.

All the good things which they enjoyed in this life they must leave behind. All their riches, honors, and sensual pleasures are left at death; and for these there will be no substitute in eternity. The vicious cravings of the immortal soul will continue, but there will be no longer any objects to gratify them; for want of which, like some venomous creatures when wounded, they will turn and prey upon themselves.

A soul with its active powers and passions, must be miserable if deprived of all objects suited to its gratification. We know scarcely any misery on earth more intolerable than a human being perishing for lack of bread or water. Hunger and thirst, if not seasonably gratified, are the sources of most excruciating pain. Now, the soul can never lose its desire of happiness; how miserable, then, must it be when this insatiable desire meets with nothing to gratify it. It is strongly represented by our Saviour in the case of the rich man in hell, who cried for one drop of water, and said, "I am tormented in this flame." The soul of the sinner will be its own chief tormentor. It is possible, that all the torment experienced in hell will be the natural consequence of sin.

Malignant passions are in their very nature attended with misery; for as benevolent affections are beatific, so malevolent feelings are accompanied with misery. Here, these

malignant passions are held under restraint; and while we are in the body, there are instinctive natural affections which counteract the malevolent feelings which exist in the depraved heart; but in eternity all restraint will be removed, and the native wickedness of the heart will act itself out: there are no natural affections there—all will be unmixed malice, envy, and wickedness. Let any moral agent who is totally depraved be abandoned to himself, and he must be miserable. His own passions will become his everlasting tormentors. He will carry a hell in his own bosom.

But of all feelings of misery, none is so intolerable as *remorse*. The conscience, or moral faculty, as it is the principal source of the most pure and sublime enjoyment to the righteous, so it is, to the lost, the scorpion which will for ever sting the soul with inexpressible anguish. The consciousness of having done wrong, of having sinned against God, and of being the cause of our own destruction, is a kind of hell as dreadful as any of which we can conceive. The lost soul will for ever have the conviction, clearly impressed, that it is its own destroyer; and that heaven with all its joys, has been lost by its own sinful folly and neglect. Oh, what a misery to be endured without the least hope of an end!

This leads to the mention of the bitterest ingredient of all in the cup of misery: it is *despair*—black despair. Oh, if there was the most distant hope of release at some future period, it would mitigate the pain, and remove at least one half the anguish of the suffering sinner. But despair admits of no alleviation. Even the commonest pain of an aching tooth or finger would now be intolerable, if there was no hope of a termination.

Men may here dream of a deliverance from hell, after a

long time of suffering, but the delusion will vanish as soon as they enter eternity. They will then find that the word of God, which denounced eternal destruction on impenitent sinners, was not a vain threat; that God will not spare the guilty, but will punish them with everlasting destruction.

O my soul, consider now how you will be able to endure such misery as must be experienced by all the lost, but especially by those who enjoyed the light of the Gospel. Canst thou fortify thyself against all this misery? Wilt thou be able to endure it with patience? Only imagine your condition, millions of ages hence. Still writhing in anguish—still belching out horrid blasphemies—still covered with the blackness of darkness—still without a ray of hope. Not a moment's ease during this long period. O my soul, will you not make one vigorous effort to escape so great misery? Will you not strive to flee from the wrath to come? Life, eternal life, is still within your reach. Lay hold on the prize. Press on to the kingdom. Take refuge in the cross, and you will be safe.

No. 52.

A DYING MOTHER'S COUNSEL

TO HER ONLY SON.

My dear Child—It is impossible for me to know with what feelings you will read these lines; but I assure you they are the expression of a heart full of maternal affection towards you, and of tender solicitude for your best, your everlasting welfare. Though this paper may now seem to you an effusion of unnecessary anxiety, yet do not treat it with neglect. Carefully preserve it: the time may come when it will be precious in your view—when you will read it with comfort to your soul. The time of my departure is at hand. I have reason daily to look for my great change. Under the infirmities of age, and in immediate prospect of the eternal world, I write this, which may be my last, my farewell advice. O, how happy am I in the reflection, that God is able, by his blessed Spirit, to accompany it with good to your soul, and to render it an instrument of your conversion. If he should be pleased so to do, if my eyes might witness his salvation in you, what reason should I have to adore the infinite riches of his grace! Methinks I could clasp you in my withered arms, and cry out, with good old Simeon, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!"

But O, how awful would it be, if this, like all my former warnings and advice, should be disregarded by you, and serve to harden you in sin! The event I must leave in the hands of a holy and sovereign God. If you will not listen to the last advice of your dying mother, but will turn a deaf ear, and continue in sin till you die, God will be just in your everlasting destruction. But the idea, my child, that you should wilfully persevere in sin, and be preparing for so awful a doom, is painful in the extreme. While I bow in

humble submission to the justice of God in your condemnation, I earnestly pray that you may now attend to the things which belong to your eternal peace, before they shall be for ever hidden from your eyes.

O, my dear child, how can you neglect the welfare of your precious, immortal soul, when so much has been done for your salvation! In Christ there is a fulness of salvation for all who will come to him. He is able and willing to save. He has laid down his life to make atonement for such creatures as we are; and will you trample under foot his precious blood, and reject his kind invitations? This Saviour, who now so kindly invites you to accept of mercy, will hereafter be clothed in the majesty of a judge. With what shame and confusion will your present conduct fill you before his tribunal! I would address you in the words of King Lemuel's mother: "What, my son! and what, the son of my womb! and what, the son of my vows!" Can I bear the thought, that the son who was given me in answer to prayer; my only son, whom I have nursed and brought up with so much care and tenderness; the son whom I have so many times prayed over and counselled; that this dear son should treat the Saviour with contempt, and stand among his enemies! O, how is my heart pained while I look forward to that dreadful day, when I shall see my poor ruined son, if he turn not from his sins, stand trembling before the judgment-seat of Christ—his face gathering blackness—anguish and despair staring through his eyelids, at hearing the amazing sentence, *Depart!*—when I shall see him bound in everlasting chains, cast into a lake of fire, and the gates shut up by Him who shutteth and no man openeth! O, who can dwell with devouring fire! who can dwell with everlasting burnings! How will your heart endure? how can your hands be strong? In view of so awful a doom, my heart bleeds for you. This doom certainly awaits you if you do not repent.

These solemn considerations have often been set before

you. But, alas! have I not reason to fear they have hitherto been lost? And what I now write will have no good effect, unless God accompany it with the influence of his Spirit. Even if I had been into the eternal world, and seen the terrors of hell and the glories of heaven, and were now returned to speak of them to you, and could do it with the tongue of an angel, it would not insure your salvation. "If you hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would you be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

You know, by sad experience, how ineffectual the use of means is, without the coöperation of the Spirit. You have also had some experience how God operates upon the mind; how a person feels when the word is made to produce conviction and terror. O, that you had experience of the operation of the Spirit in regeneration! I wish to impress upon you a sense of your dependence upon the grace of God. Your soul is in his hand. He can awaken, and sanctify you, and prepare you for heaven. O, my child, take heed that you do not grieve the Spirit who has been so long striving with you, and provoke him to depart from you. Your case then would be desperate. All the means you might enjoy would only harden you in sin, and increase your treasure of wrath. For your soul's sake, do not grieve the Holy Spirit. Consider repentance as your immediate duty. Forsake your sins. Especially guard against those that most easily beset you. I need not describe these; conscience will point them out. Do, my child, be in earnest for the salvation of your soul; and may God, who delights not in the death of a sinner, but rather that he turn and live, have mercy upon you.

Let not your sins discourage you from seeking mercy. In immediate repentance there is hope. Think not that, because you have neglected so many counsels and warnings, and stifled so many convictions, there is no hope, and that you had better take what comfort you can in sin, and not trouble yourself about another world. These thoughts are

the suggestions of the deceiver. Reject them. Say within yourself, "I will listen to none of these suggestions. I will be earnest in seeking for mercy. Have mercy upon me, O Lord! have mercy upon me! Blessed be thy name, I am yet in a land of hope. Many prayers have been made for me. Dear relations and friends have turned to the Lord, and are crying to him on my behalf. He is a prayer-hearing God. He is still merciful and gracious. Lord, help me so to ask, that I may receive; so to seek, that I may find." Fain would I imagine, my dear child, that I hear you breathing out such language in retirement. May the Father of mercies graciously regard you, and the Holy Spirit convince, humble, and sanctify you!

And now, my dear child, let me hope that you will no longer trifle with your soul and with eternity! Receive this as the last advice of a dying mother. O, tear every idol from your heart. Let nothing stand in competition with God. Embrace the Lord Jesus by faith. Give yourself and all you have to him, and taste the joys of his salvation. Make him your trust, your light, your strength. Let the Bible be your guide, and the faithful servants of God your companions. Never expose yourself to the reproach of living to yourself. Ten thousand obligations require you to live to him who died for you. Secure yourself against the woful reflection on a dying bed, that you have done nothing for the cause of the Redeemer. Labor to be useful. Go forth to every duty and trial, trusting in God; and keep the final judgment and eternity constantly in view. I commend you, my beloved, my only son, to the mercy of that God before whom both you and I must shortly appear. That he may do for you above what I can ask or think, is the sincere and earnest prayer of your *affectionate, dying* MOTHER.

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No. 53.

THE

AFRICAN SERVANT.

AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE.

BY REV. LEGH RICHMOND.

During a residence of some years' continuance in the neighborhood of the sea, an officer in the navy called upon me and stated that he had just taken a lodging in the parish for his wife and children, and that he had an African whom he had kept three years in his service. "The lad is a deserving fellow," said the officer, "and he has a great desire to be baptized; I have promised him to ask you to do it for him, if you have no objections."

"Does he know any thing," I replied, "of the principles of the Christian religion?"

"O, yes, I am sure he does," answered the captain; "for he talks a great deal about it in the kitchen, and often gets laughed at for his pains; but he takes it all very patiently."

"Does he behave well as your servant?"

"Yes, that he does: he is as honest and civil a fellow as ever came aboard a ship, or lived in a house."

"Was he always so well-behaved?"

"No," said the officer; "when I first had him he was often very unruly and deceitful; but for the last two years he has been quite like another creature."

"Well, sir, I shall be very glad to see him, and think it probable I shall wish to go through a course of instruction and examination; during which I shall be able to form a judgment how far it will be right to admit him to the ordinance of baptism. Can he read?"

"Yes," replied his master; "he has been taking great pains to learn to read for some time past, and can make out a chapter in the Bible pretty well, as my maid-servant informs me. He speaks English better than many of his countrymen, but you will find it a little broken. When will it be convenient that I should send him over to you?"

"To-morrow afternoon, sir, if you please."

"He shall come to you about four o'clock, and you shall see what you can make of him."

With this promise he took his leave. I felt glad of an opportunity of instructing a native of that land whose wrongs and injuries had often caused me to sigh and mourn.

At the appointed hour my African disciple arrived. He was a very young looking man, with a sensible, lively, and pleasing turn of countenance.

I desired him to sit down, and said, "Your master informs me that you wish to have some conversation with me respecting Christian baptism?"

"Yes, sir, me very much wish to be a Christian."

"Why do you wish so?"

"Because me know that Christian go to heaven when he die."

"How long have you had that wish?" I said.

"Ever since me hear one good minister preach in America, two years ago."

"Where were you born?"

"In Africa. Me was very little boy when me was made slave by the white men."

"How was that?"

"Me left father and mother one day at home to go to get shells by the sea-shore; and, as I was stooping down to gather them up, some white sailors came out of a boat and took me away. Me never see father nor mother again."

"And what became of you then?"

"Me was put into ship and brought to Jamaica, and sold to a massa, who keep me in his house to serve him some years; when, about three years ago, Captain W——, my massa that spoke to you, bought me to be his servant on board his ship. And he be good massa; and me live with him ever since."

"And what thoughts had you about your soul all that time before you went to America?" I asked him.

"Me no care for my soul at all before then. No man teach me a word about my soul."

"Well, now tell me farther about what happened to you in America. How came you there?"

"My massa take me there in a ship, and he stop there one month; and then me hear the good minister."

"And what did that minister say?"

"He said me was a great sinner."

"What, did he speak to you in particular?"

"Yes, me think so; for there was a great many to hear him, but he tell them all about me."

"What did he say?"

"He say about all the things that were in my heart."

"What things?"

"My sin, my ignorance, my know nothing, my believe

nothing. The good minister made me see that me *think* nothing good, nor *do* nothing good."

"And what else did he tell you?"

"He sometime look me in the face, and say, that Jesus Christ came to die for sinners, poor black sinners as well as white sinners. Me thought this was very good, very good indeed, to do so for wicked sinner."

"And what made you think this was all spoken to you in particular?"

"Because me sure no such wicked sinner as me in all the place. The good minister must know me was there."

"And what did you think about yourself while he preached about Jesus Christ?"

"Sir, me was very much afraid when he said the wicked must be turned into hell fire. For me felt that me was very wicked sinner, and that make me cry. And he talk much about the love of Christ to sinners, and that make me cry more. And me thought me must love Jesus Christ; but me not know how, and that make me cry again."

"Did you hear more sermons than one during that month?"

"Yes, sir; massa give me leave to go three times, and all the times me wanted to love Jesus more, and do what Jesus said; but my heart seem sometime hard like a stone."

"Have you ever heard any preaching since that time?"

"Never, till me hear sermon at this church last Sunday, and then me long to be baptized in Jesus' name."

"And what have been your thoughts all the time since you first heard those sermons in America; did you tell any body then what you felt?"

"No; me speak to nobody but to God. The good minister say that God hear the cry of the poor; so me cry to God, and he hear me. And me often think about Jesus Christ, and wish to be like him."

"Can you read?"

"A little."

"Who taught you to read?"

"God teach me to read."

"What do you mean by saying so?"

"God give me desire to read, and that make reading easy. Massa give me Bible, and one sailor show me the letters; and so me learn to read by myself with God's good help."

"And what do you read in the Bible?"

"O, me read all about Jesus Christ, and how he loved sinners; and wicked men killed him, and he died and came again from the grave, and all this for poor negro. And it sometime make me cry, to think that Christ love so poor negro."

"And what do the people say about your reading and praying, and attention to the things of God?"

"Some wicked people, that do not love Jesus Christ, call me great fool, and negro dog, and black hypocrite. And that make me sometime feel angry; but then me remember Christian must not be angry. Jesus Christ was called ugly, black names, and he was quiet as a lamb; and so then me remember Jesus Christ, and me say nothing again to them."

I was much delighted with the simplicity and apparent sincerity of this poor African; and wished to ascertain what measure of light and feeling he possessed on a few leading points. St. Paul's summary of religion* occurring to me, I said, "Tell me what is *faith?* What is your own faith? What do you believe about Jesus Christ, and your own soul?"

"Me believe," said he, "that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; and though me be chief of sinners, Jesus will save me, though me be only poor black negro."

"What is your *hope?* What do you hope for, both as to this life and that which is to come?"

"Me hope Christ Jesus will take good care of me, and keep me from sin and harm, while me live here; and me

* Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. 1 Cor. 13: 13.

hope, when me come to die, to go and live with him always, and never die again."

"What are your thoughts about Christian *love* or charity? I mean, whom and what do you most love?"

"Me love God the Father, because he was so good to send his Son. Me love Jesus Christ, because he die for poor sinner. Me love all men, black men and white men too; for God made them all. Me love good Christian people, because Jesus love them, and they love Jesus."

Such was my first conversation with this young disciple; I rejoiced in the prospect of receiving him into the church, agreeably to his desire. I wished, however, to converse somewhat further, and inquire more minutely into his conduct, and promised to ride over and see him in a few days, at his master's lodgings.

When he was gone, I thought within myself, God hath indeed redeemed souls, by the blood of his Son, "out of *every* kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." It is a happy thought, that "Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord!"

Not many days after the first interview with my African disciple, I went from home on horseback with the design of visiting and conversing with him again at his master's house, which was situated in a part of the parish near four miles distant from my own. The road which I took lay over a lofty down or hill, which commands a prospect of scenery seldom equalled for beauty and magnificence. It gave birth to silent, but instructive contemplation.

As I pursued the meditations which this magnificent and varied scenery excited in my mind, I approached the edge of a tremendous perpendicular cliff with which the down terminates; I dismounted from my horse and tied it to a bush. The breaking of the waves against the foot of the cliff, at so great a distance beneath me, produced an incessant and pleasing murmur. The sea-gulls were flying

between the top of the cliff where I stood and the rocks below, attending upon their nests built in the holes of the cliff. The whole scene, in every direction, was grand and impressive; it was suitable to devotion. The Creator appeared in the works of his creation, and called upon the creature to honor and adore. To the believer this exercise is doubly delightful. He possesses a right to the enjoyments of nature and providence, as well as to the privileges of grace. His title-deed runs thus: "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

I cast my eye downwards a little to the left, towards a small cove, the shore of which consists of fine hard sand. It is surrounded by fragments of rock, chalk cliffs, and steep banks of broken earth. Shut out from human intercourse and dwellings, it seems formed for retirement and contemplation. On one of these rocks I unexpectedly observed a man sitting with a book, which he was reading. The place was near two hundred yards perpendicularly below me; but I soon discovered by his dress, and by the black color of his features, contrasted with the white rocks beside him, that it was no other than my African disciple, with, as I doubted not, a Bible in his hand. I rejoiced at this unlooked-for opportunity of meeting him in so solitary and interesting a situation. I descended a steep bank, winding by a kind of rude staircase, formed by fishermen and shepherd's boys, in the side of the cliff down to the shore.

He was intent on his book, and did not perceive me till I approached very near to him.

"William, is that you?"

"Ah! massa, me very glad to see you. How came massa into this place? Me thought nobody here but only God and me."

"I was coming to your master's house to see you, and rode round by this way for the sake of the prospect. I often come here in fine weather to look at the sea and the shipping. Is that your Bible?"

"Yes, sir, this is my dear, good Bible."

"I am glad," said I, "to see you so well employed; it is a good sign, William."

"Yes, massa, a sign that God is good to me; but me never good to God."

"How so?"

"Me never thank him enough; me never pray to him enough; me never remember enough who give me all these good things. Massa, me afraid my heart very bad. Me wish me was like you."

"Like me, William? Why, you are like me, a poor helpless sinner, that must, like yourself, perish in his sins, unless God of his infinite mercy and grace pluck him as a brand from the burning, and make him an instance of distinguishing love and favor. There is no difference; we have both come short of the glory of God: all have sinned."

"No, me no like you, massa; me think nobody like me, nobody feel such a heart as me."

"Yes, William, your feelings, I am persuaded, are like those of every truly convinced soul who sees the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the greatness of the price which Christ Jesus paid for the sinner's ransom. You can say, in the words of the hymn,

'I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.'"

"O yes, sir, me believe that Jesus died for poor negro. What would become of poor wicked negro, if Christ no die for him? But he die for the chief of sinners, and that make my heart sometime quite glad."

"What part of the Bible were you reading, William?"

"Me read how the man on the cross spoke to Christ, and Christ spoke to him. Now, that man's prayer just do for me. 'Lord, remember me;' Lord, remember poor negro sinner: this is my prayer every morning, and sometime at night too: when me cannot think of many words then me say the same again, Lord, remember poor negro sinner."

"And be assured, William, the Lord hears that prayer. He pardoned and accepted the thief upon the cross, and he will not reject you; he will in no wise cast out any that come to him."

"No, sir, I believe it; but there is so much sin in my heart, it make me afraid, and sorry. Massa, do you see these limpets,* how fast they stick to the rocks here? Just so sin stick fast to my heart."

"It may be so, William; but take another comparison: do you cleave to Jesus Christ by faith in his death and righteousness, as those limpets cleave to the rock, and neither seas nor storms shall separate you from his love."

"That is just what me want."

"Tell me, William, is not that very sin which you speak of, a burden to you? You do not love it: you would be glad to obtain strength against it, and to be freed from it, would you not?"

"O yes; me give all this world, if me had it, to be without sin."

"Come, then, and welcome, to Jesus Christ, my brother; his blood cleanseth from all sin. He gave himself as a ransom for sinners. He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Come, freely come to Jesus, the Saviour of sinners."

"Yes, massa," said the poor fellow weeping, "me will come, but me come very slow; very slow, massa; me want to run, me want to fly. Jesus is very good to poor negro, to send you to tell him all this."

"But this is not the first time you have heard these truths."

"No, sir, they have been comfort to my soul many

* A kind of shell-fish which abounds in the place where we were, and which sticks to the rocks with great force.

times since me hear good minister preach in America, as me tell you last week at your house."

"Well, now I hope, William, that since God has been so graciously pleased to open your eyes, and affect your mind with such a great sense of his goodness, in giving his Son to die for your sake, I hope that you do endeavor to keep his commandments; I hope you strive to behave well to your master and mistress, and fellow-servants. He that is a Christian inwardly, will be a Christian outwardly; he that truly and savingly believes in Christ, will show his faith by his works, as the apostle says. Is it not so, William?"

"Yes, sir, me want to do so. Me want to be faithful. Me sorry to think how bad servant me was before the good things of Jesus Christ come to my heart. Me wish to do well to my massa, when he see me, and when he not see me, for me know God always see me. Me know that if me sin against mine own massa, me sin against God, and God be very angry with me. Besides, how can me love Christ, if me do not do what Christ tell me? Me love my fellow-servants, though, as me tell you before, they do not much love me, and I pray God to bless them. And when they say bad things, and try to make me angry, then me think, if Jesus Christ were in poor negro's place, he would not revile and answer again with bad words and temper, but he say little, and pray much. And so then me say nothing at all, but pray God to forgive them."

The more I conversed with this African convert, the more satisfactory were the evidences of his mind being spiritually enlightened, and his heart effectually wrought upon by the grace of God.

The circumstances of the place in which we met together, contributed much to the interesting effect which the conversation produced on my mind. The little cove or bay was beautiful in the extreme. The air was calm and serene. The sun shone, but we were sheltered from its rays by the cliffs. One of these was stupendously lofty and large. It was white as snow; its summit hung directly over our

heads. The sea-fowl were flying around it. Its whiteness was occasionally checkered with dark green masses of samphire, which grew there. On the other side, and behind us, was a more gradual declivity of many-colored earths, interspersed with green patches of grass and bushes, and little streams of water trickling down the bank, and mingling with the sea at the bottom. At our feet the waves were advancing over shelves of rocks covered with a great variety of sea-weeds, which swam in little fragments, and displayed much beauty and elegance of form, as they were successively thrown upon the sand.

Ships of war and commerce were seen at different distances. Fishermen were plying their trade in boats nearer to the shore. The noise of the flowing tide, combined with the voices of the sea-gulls over our heads, and now and then a distant gun fired from the ships as they passed along, added much to the peculiar sensations to which the scene gave birth. Occasionally the striking of oars upon the waves, accompanied by the boatman's song, met the ear. The sheep aloft upon the down sometimes mingled their bleatings with the other sounds. Thus all nature seemed to unite in impressing an attentive observer's heart with affecting thoughts.

I continued for a considerable time in conversation with the African, finding that his master was gone from home for the day, and had given him liberty for some hours. I spoke to him on the nature, duty, and privilege of Christian baptism; pointed out to him the principles of the Scriptures upon that head, and found that he was very desirous of conforming to them. He appeared to me to be well qualified for receiving that pledge of his Redeemer's love; and I rejoiced in the prospect of beholding him no longer a "stranger and foreigner, but a fellow-citizen with the saints and household of God."

I was much pleased with the affectionate manner in which he spoke of his parents, from whom he had been stolen in his childhood; and his wishes that God might

direct them by some means to the knowledge of the Saviour.

"Who knows," I said, "but some of these ships may be carrying a missionary to the country where they live, to declare the good news of salvation to your countrymen, and to your own dear parents in particular, if they are yet alive."

"O! my dear father and mother: my dear, gracious Saviour," exclaimed he, leaping from the ground as he spake, "if thou wilt but save their souls, and tell them what thou hast done for sinners—but"

He stopped, and seemed much affected.

"My friend," said I, "I will now pray with you for your own soul, and those of your parents also."

"Do, massa, that is very good and kind; do pray for poor negro souls here and everywhere."

This was a new and solemn "house of prayer." The sea-sand was our floor, the heavens were our roof, the cliffs, the rocks, the hills, and the waves, formed the walls of our chamber. It was not indeed a "place where prayer was wont to be made," but for this once it became a hallowed spot: it will by me ever be remembered as such. The presence of God was there. I prayed. The African wept. His heart was full. I felt with him, and could not but weep likewise.

The last day will show whether our tears were not the tears of sincerity and Christian love.

It was time for my return; I leaned upon his arm, as we ascended the steep cliff in my way back to my horse, which I had left at the top of the hill. Humility and thankfulness were marked in his countenance. I leaned upon his arm with the feelings of a *brother*. It was a relationship I was happy to own. I took him by the hand at parting, appointed one more interview previous to the day of baptizing him, and bade him farewell for the present.

"God bless you, my dear massa."

"And you, my fellow-christian, for ever and ever."

The interesting and affecting conversation which I had with the African servant, produced a sensation not easy to be expressed. As I returned home I was led into meditation on the singular clearness and beauty of those evidences of faith and conversion to God which I had just seen and heard. How plainly, I thought, it appears, that salvation is freely by grace, through faith; and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. What but the Holy Spirit, who is the Author and Giver of the life of grace, could have wrought such a change from the once dark, perverse, and ignorant heathen, to this now convinced, enlightened, humble, and believing Christian? How manifestly is the uncontrolled sovereignty of the divine will exercised in the calling and translating of sinners from darkness to light! What a lesson may the nominal Christian of a civilized country sometimes learn from the simple, sincere religion of a converted heathen!

I afterwards made particular inquiry into this young man's domestic and general deportment. Every thing I heard was satisfactory; nor could I entertain a doubt respecting the consistency of his conduct and character. I had some further conversation with him, in the course of which I pursued such a plan of scriptural instruction and examination as I conceived to be the most suitable to his progressive state of mind. He improved much in reading, carried his Bible constantly in his pocket, and took every opportunity which his duty to his master's service would allow for perusing it. I have frequently had occasion to observe, that among the truly religious poor who have not had the advantage of learning to read in early youth, a concern about the soul, and desire to know the Word of God, have proved effectual motives for their learning to read with great ease and advantage to themselves and others. It was strikingly so in the present case.

I had, for a considerable time, been accustomed to meet some serious persons once a week, in a cottage at no great distance from the house where he lived, for the purpose of

religious conversation, instruction, and prayer. Having found these occasions remarkably useful and interesting to myself and others, I thought it would be very desirable to take the African there, in order that there might be many witnesses to the simplicity and sincerity of real Christianity, as exhibited in the character of this promising young convert. I hoped it might prove an eminent means of grace to excite and quicken the spirit of prayer and praise among some over whose spiritual progress I was anxiously watching.

I accordingly obtained his master's leave that he should attend me to one of my cottage assemblies. His master, although he did not himself appear to live under the influence of real religion, or to manifest any serious concern respecting his own state, yet was pleased with my attention to his servant, and always spoke well of his behavior.

I set out on the day appointed for the interview. The cottage at which we usually assembled was near four miles distant from my own residence, and was situated at the corner of an oak wood which screened it both from the burning heat of summer suns, and the heavy blasts of winter south-west storms. As I approached it, I saw my friend the African sitting under a tree and awaiting my arrival. He held in his hand a little Tract which I had given him; his Bible lay on the ground. He rose with much cheerfulness, saying,

"Ah! massa, me very glad to see you; me think you long time coming."

"William, I hope you are well. I am going to take you with me to a few of my friends, who, I hope, are also the friends of the Lord. We meet every Wednesday evening for conversation about the things that belong to our everlasting peace, and I am sure you will be a welcome visitor."

"Massa, me not good enough to be with such good people. Me great sinner. They be good Christians."

"If you were to ask them, William, they would each tell you they were worse than any body. Many of them were once, and that not very long ago, living in an openly

sinful manner, ignorant of God, and the enemies of Jesus Christ by thought and deed. But divine grace stopped them in their wicked course, and subdued their hearts to the love and obedience of him and his Gospel. You will only meet a company of poor fellow-sinners, who love to speak and sing the praises of redeeming love; and I am sure that is a song in which you will be willing to join them."

"O yes, sir, that song just do for poor William."

By this time we had arrived at the cottage garden gate. Several well-known faces appeared in and near the house, and the smile of affection welcomed us as we entered. It was known that the African was to visit the little society this evening, and satisfaction beamed in every countenance, as I took him by the hand and introduced him among them, saying, "I have brought a brother from Africa to see you, my friends. Bid him welcome in the name of the Lord."

"Sir," said a humble and pious laborer, whose heart and tongue always overflowed with Christian kindness, "we are at all times glad to see our dear minister, but especially so to-day, in such company as you have brought with you. We have heard how gracious the Lord has been to him. Give me your hand, good friend, (turning to the African,) God be with you here and everywhere; and blessed be his holy name for calling wicked sinners, as I hope he has done you and me, to love and serve him for his mercy's sake."

Each one greeted him as he came into the house, and some addressed him in very kind and impressive language.

"Massa," said he, "me not know what to say to all these good friends; me think this look like little heaven upon earth."

He then, with tears in his eyes, which, almost before he spoke, brought responsive drops into those of all present, said,

"Good friends and brethren in Christ Jesus, God bless you all, and bring you to heaven at last."

It was my stated custom when I met to converse with

those friends, to begin with prayer and reading a portion of the Scriptures.

When this was ended, I told the people present that the providence of God had brought this young man for a time under my ministry; and that finding him very seriously disposed, and believing him to be sincere in his religious profession, I had resolved on baptizing him agreeably to his own wishes. I added that I had now brought him with me to join in Christian conversation with us; for, as in old times, "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another," as a testimony that they thought upon his name, so I hoped we were fulfilling a Christian and brotherly duty in thus assembling for mutual edification.

Addressing myself to the African, I said, "William, tell me who made you?"

"God, the good Father."

"Who redeemed you?"

"Jesus, his dear Son, who died for me?"

"Who sanctified you?"

"The Holy Ghost, who teach me to know the good Father, and his dear Son, Jesus."

"What was your state by nature?"

"Me wicked sinner, me know nothing but sin, me do nothing but sin; my soul more black than my body."

"Has any change taken place in you since then?"

"Me hope so, massa, but me sometime afraid no."

"If you are changed, who changed you?"

"God, the good Father; Jesus, his dear Son; and God the Holy Spirit."

"How was any change brought about in you?"

"God make me slave when me was young little boy."

"How, William! would you say God made you a slave?"

"No, massa, no; me mean God let me be made slave by white men to do me good."

"How to do you good?"

"He take me from the land of darkness and bring me to the land of light."

"Which do you call the land of light; the West India Islands?"

"No, massa, they be the land of Providence, but America be the land of light to me; for there me first hear good minister preach. And now this place where I am now is the land of more light; for here you teach me more and more how good Jesus is to sinners."

"What does the blood of Christ do?"

"It cleanse from all sin. And as me hope, from my sin."

"Are, then, all men cleansed from sin by his blood?"

"O no, massa."

"Who are cleansed and saved?"

"Those that have faith in him."

"Can you prove that out of the Bible?"

"Yes, sir: 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.' John 3: 36."

"What is it to have faith?"

"Me suppose that it is to think much about Jesus Christ; to love him much, to believe all he says to be true, to pray to him very much; and when me feel very weak and very sinful, to think that he is very strong, and very good, and all that for my sake."

"And have you such faith as you describe?"

"O, massa, me think sometimes me have no faith at all."

"Why so, William?"

"When me want to think about Jesus Christ, my mind run about after other things; when me want to love him, my heart seem quite cold; when me want to believe all to be true what he says to sinners, me then think it is not true for me; when me want to pray, the devil put bad, very bad thoughts into me, and me never thank Christ enough. Now all this make me sometimes afraid I have no faith."

I observed a very earnest glow of attention and fellow-feeling in some countenances present, as he spoke these words. I then said,

"I think, William, I can prove that you have faith, notwithstanding your fears to the contrary. Answer me a few more questions.

"Did you begin to think yourself a great sinner, and to feel the want of a Saviour of your own self, and by your own thought and doing?"

"O, no; it came to me when me think nothing about it, and seek nothing about it."

"Who sent the good minister in America to awaken your soul by his preaching?"

"God, very certainly."

"Who then began the work of serious thought and feeling in your mind?"

"The good God; me could not do it of myself, me sure of that."

"Do you not think that Jesus Christ and his salvation is the one thing most needful and most desirable?"

"O, yes, me quite sure of that."

"Do you not believe that he is able to save you?"

"Yes, he is able to save to the uttermost."

"Do you think he is unwilling to save you?"

"Me dare not say that. He so good, so merciful, so kind, to say he will in no wise cast out any that come to him."

"Do you wish, and desire, and strive to keep his commandments?"

"Yes, massa, because me love him, and that make me want to do as he say."

"Are you willing to suffer for his sake, if God should call you to do so?"

"Me do think me could die for the love of him; he not think it too much to die for wicked sinner; why should wicked sinner think it much to die for so good and righteous a Saviour?"

"I think and hope I may say to you, William, thy faith hath made thee whole."

Thus ended my examination for the present. The other

friends who were in the house listened with the most affectionate anxiety to all that passed. One of them observed, not without evident emotion,

"I see, sir, that though some men are white, and some are black, true Christianity is all of one color. My own heart has gone with this good man every word he has spoken."

"And so has mine," gently reëchoed from every part of the room.

After some time passed in more general conversation on the subject of the African's history, I said, "Let us now praise God for the rich and unspeakable gift of his grace, and sing the hymn of 'redeeming love:'

'Now begin the heavenly theme,
Sing aloud in Jesus' name,' etc."

which was accordingly done. Whatever might be the merit of the natural voices, it was plain there was melody in all their hearts.

The African was not much used to our way of singing, yet joined with great earnestness and affection, which showed how truly he felt what was uttered. When the fifth verse was ended—

"Nothing brought him from above,
Nothing but redeeming love"—

he repeated the words, almost unconscious where he was.

"No, nothing, nothing but redeeming love bring him down to poor William; nothing but redeeming love."

The following verses were added, and sung by way of conclusion:

See, a stranger comes to view;
Though he's black,* he's comely too:
Come to join the choirs above,
Singing of redeeming love.

* Song of Solomon, 1: 5.

Welcome, Negro, welcome here,
Banish doubt, and banish fear;
You, who Christ's salvation prove,
Praise and bless redeeming love.

I concluded with some remarks on the nature of salvation by grace, and exhorted all present to press forward in the heavenly race. It was an evening, the circumstances of which, had they never been recorded on earth, were yet doubtless registered in the book of remembrance above.

I then fixed the day for the baptism of the African, and so took leave of my little affectionate circle.

The moon shone bright as I returned home, and was beautifully reflected from the waters of the lake: harmony and repose characterized the scene. I had just been uniting in the praises of the God of grace and providence; and now the God of nature demanded a fresh tribute of thanksgiving for the beauties and comforts of creation, as David sang, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

In a few days the African was baptized; and not long after, he went a voyage with his master.

Since that time I have not been able to hear any tidings of him: whether he yet wanders as a pilgrim in this lower world, or whether he has joined the heavenly choir in the song of redeeming love in glory, I know not. Of this I am persuaded, he was a monument to the Lord's praise. He bore the impression of the Saviour's image on his heart, and exhibited the marks of converting grace in his life and conversation, with singular simplicity and unfeigned sincerity. O, give to God the glory.

No. 54.

CONVICTION

AT

THE JUDGMENT-DAY.

The Judgment-day will exhibit scenes of such interest as will arrest the sinner's attention, and fix it upon *his own character*. A principal difficulty in convicting sinners in this world, arises from their being so engrossed with other subjects as to prevent a serious contemplation of themselves. But at the bar of God, that wealth which was once looked upon as the treasure of the soul, will have lost its value. Those fashions which once occupied the mind with their ever-changing vanities, will be all forgotten, or only remembered as having been the occasion of ceaseless levity and folly. The distinctions of rank will have given place to the distinction between the righteous and the wicked; and the soul will be emptied of all those worldly interests which have diverted the mind from the consideration of its real character and condition.

If a man be on trial for a single crime of which he is guilty, he turns pale at the sight of a well-known witness. The absence of his diversions, the solemn process and the open testimony call his attention to his character and conduct with a power which cannot be resisted. But how much more must the sinner's attention be fixed upon himself, when he stands arraigned before the infinitely holy and omniscient God! It is not in the nature of the human mind, thus arraigned, to avoid an impartial attention to its own character. When a soul is separated from all earthly attachments; when scenes of such solemn and amazing interest are rising before it; when its own most secret acts are all unfolded; and when its destiny is about to be settled for ever; how certainly will every wayward passion be hushed, and the whole soul be fixed with keenest intensity upon its guilt!

To increase this conviction of guilt, *the perfect law of God* will there be held up to the sinner's mind. One difficulty in convicting sinners here, arises from the fact that they set aside God's law and adopt other rules of conduct.

Take one who will have no law but that of honor, and undertake to convince him of sin against God. How can you convict him? He admits no divine law. His only law is that of honor. Open the Scriptures and show him that he habitually breaks God's law; still he feels no guilt. That is not his rule of action. Become earnest with him; charge him with sin, and urge him to fly to the Lord Jesus Christ for pardon; he is offended—he fancies you represent him as mean and vulgar. In short, take what course you will, and just so far as his law of honor sets aside God's law, true conviction is prevented.

So, if one makes the common standard of *morality* his only rule of conduct, you cannot convict him. Talk to him of guilt; he is astonished—he is, perhaps, angry. He asks, What have I done that is wrong; who can accuse me of any impropriety? And, according to his standard, he is, perhaps, guiltless. That law which reaches to all the thoughts and intents of the heart is cast out of his mind, and the guilty rebel is pleased to see how well his conduct accords with the rule he has adopted—that of mere morality.

But a far different standard will be produced on another day. When the great God is enthroned, and worlds are assembled, these standards, mere morality and worldly honor, will appear very small. The great question then will be, Has he "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord?" To decide this question, the infinitely holy law will be produced; that law which says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." This will wake up thought in the sinner's bosom. He will at once compare with it his life—his heart. His full conviction will then be, *By this holy law I am condemned for ever.*

Another source of conviction in the day of judgment will be, *the manifest preparation for the immediate execution of justice.* When a judicial process is going on, if the criminal supposes he may possibly escape punishment, or that a temporary respite at least will be granted, he finds a slight relief. The least hope of impunity enfeebles the convictions of a guilty mind, and the delay of punishment exerts, in some degree, a similar influence. But suppose his trial is to take place this hour, and his execution the next. Suppose that,

while the criminal faces the court, and the testimony is condemning him, he sees the fatal block, and the grim executioner with his axe, waiting to do his office; do you not see that this prospect of immediate execution must tend to fix his mind upon his guilt, and give him a lively sense of its turpitude?

Precisely like this is the condition of the sinner before the bar of God. Mercy has been spurned. All hope of pardon is extinguished. No respite is expected. The sinner expects nothing but the immediate execution of justice. As he comes near the gate of the New Jerusalem, and sees its glories, and hears its songs, he looks down also on the world of woe. Its billows of fire rise before him; its wailings and its blasphemies fall upon his ear. How can he avoid the conviction of sin? Nothing can sustain him. He has no hope of impunity. He there sees that his "judgment lingereth not, and his damnation slumbereth not."

Conviction of sin, dear reader, in the day of judgment, will be clear; but weigh well the momentous truth, that *mere conviction of sin is not conversion.* If it were, every sinner would be converted in the judgment-day. Judas and Simon Magus were convicted of sin; and instead of being converted, their conviction was, like the convictions of the judgment, succeeded by the desperation of hell. It had in it no filial grief for having offended God; no living faith in Christ; no communion with God; no spirit of implicit obedience.

Nor does the most pungent conviction of sin *necessarily lead to conversion.* It is no merit in the murderer to feel remorse; and if the transgressor of God's law has not been reconciled to him through Christ, however deep his conviction, he is still as really a rebel against his Maker as is the convicted sinner at the judgment, or in hell.

Look, then, convicted sinner, to your real condition. All your tears are unavailing—all your distress arises from sin which you will not forsake—all your trouble of mind arises from your unwillingness to go with an humble heart to your Saviour, and accept of his freely offered grace. Nurture that conviction to ever so great a degree, and it will by no means secure your preparation for heaven. It may rise to the agonies of death—yea, the terrors of hell may take hold of you, and still your conviction may only be an introduc-

tion to the convictions of the judgment. If, then, you would make your salvation sure, put no trust in your convictions; but repent and "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

God will be glorified in the punishment of every unreclaimed offender. All heaven will for ever vindicate his character in the execution of his justice; and hell itself, in its deep eternal wail, will respond, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good." All the holy will *see* the justice of God—and all the wicked *feel* it. As often as the one look down and see the justice of God, and shout Allelujahs, the groans of the other, as a responsive Amen, will be borne upwards upon the smoke of their torment; and the whole universe, righteous and wicked, friends and enemies, shall together bear testimony to the justice, wisdom, and goodness of God.

How much better is it, dying sinner, that you should *see your guilt and repent, before you are compelled to stand at the bar of God.* Then conviction will indeed be unavoidable. The soul-stirring scenes of that day will awaken the most careless. The law of God will be exhibited in its simplicity. It will make its resistless appeals to your conscience, and its tremendous penalty, just ready to fall upon your head, will awaken your mind to the enormity of your guilt. But then, alas! conviction will be in vain. It will only be as the commencement of the pangs of death eternal. The time is drawing near: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment, and to convince all that are ungodly." O, what a throng! Are you among them? Their faces gather blackness—they are speechless—conviction—conviction, deep, despairing, and eternal—seizes upon their souls, and they are damned for ever. O, sinner, would you now turn, your fainting soul might look up to Christ and live. Though covered with shame, you might accept a pardon, and be adopted into the family of God. Come to him now. Take a full view of yourself as a sinner against God, a transgressor of his law, and a despiser of his mercy. Come, come to the Refuge provided for the guilty.

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No. 55.

THE

WELL-SPENT DAY.

BY REV. PHILIP DODDRIDGE, D. D.

My dear Friend—Since you desire my thoughts in writing, and at large, on the subject of our late conversation, namely, *by what particular methods in our daily conduct a life of devotion and usefulness may be most happily maintained and secured*, I set myself with cheerfulness to recollect and digest the hints which I then gave you; hoping that it may be of some service to you in your most important interests, and may also fix on my own mind a deeper sense of obligation to govern my own life by the rules I offer to others. I esteem attempts of this kind among the pleasantest fruits and the surest cements of friendship; and, as I hope ours will last for ever, I am persuaded a mutual care to cherish sentiments of this kind will add everlasting endearments to it.

The directions you will expect from me on this occasion, naturally divide themselves into three heads: How we are to regard God, *in the beginning, the progress, and the close of the day.*

I. In the *beginning of the day*, it should certainly be our care to lift up our hearts to God, as soon as we awake, and while we are arising; and then to set ourselves seriously and immediately to the secret devotion of the morning.

The first of these seems exceedingly natural. There are so many things that may suggest a great variety of pious reflections and ejaculations, which are so obvious, that one would think a serious mind could hardly miss them. The ease and cheerfulness of our minds at our first awak-

ing; the refreshment we find from sleep; the security we have enjoyed in that defenceless state; the provision of warm and decent apparel; the cheerful light of the returning sun; or even—what is not unfit to mention to you—the contrivances of art, taught and furnished by the great Author of all our conveniences, to supply us with many useful hours of life in the absence of the sun; the hope of returning to the dear society of our friends; the prospect of spending another day in the service of God, and the improvement of our own minds; and, above all, the lively hope of a joyful resurrection to an eternal day of happiness and glory: any of these particulars, and many more which I do not mention, may furnish us with matter of pleasing reflection and cheerful praise, while we are rising. And, for our further assistance, when we are alone at this time, it may not be improper to speak sometimes to ourselves, and sometimes to our heavenly Father, in the natural expressions of joy and thankfulness. Permit me, sir, to add, that if we find our hearts in such a frame at our first awaking, even *that* is just matter of praise, and the rather, as perhaps it is an answer to the prayer with which we lay down.

For the exercise of secret devotion in a morning, which I hope will generally be our first work after we rise, I cannot prescribe an exact method to another. You must, my dear friend, consult your own taste in some measure. The constituent parts of the service are, in general, plain. Were I to propose a particular model for those who have half or three quarters of an hour at command, it should be this:

To begin the stated devotions of the day with a solemn act of praise, acknowledging the mercies we had been reflecting on while rising: never forgetting to mention Christ, as the great foundation of all our enjoyments, and all our hopes, or to return thanks for the influences of the blessed Spirit, which have led our hearts to God, or are then engaging us to seek him. This, as well as other offices of devotion, afterwards mentioned, must be performed attentively and sincerely; for not to offer our praises heartily, is,

in the sight of God, not to praise at all. We may properly conclude this address with an explicit renewal of our covenant with God, declaring our continued resolution of being devoted to him, and particularly of living to his glory the ensuing day.

It may then be suitable to take a prospect of the day before us, so far as we can probably foresee, in the general, where, and how it may be spent; and seriously to reflect, "How shall I employ myself for God this day? What business is to be done, and in what order? What opportunities may I expect, either of doing or receiving good? What temptations am I likely to be assaulted with, in any place, company, or circumstances, to which I may be introduced? In what instances have I lately failed? And how shall I be safest now?"

After this review, it will be proper to offer up a short prayer, begging that God would quicken us to each of these foreseen duties; that he would fortify us against each of these apprehended dangers; that he would grant us success in such or such a business undertaken for his glory; and, also, that he would help us to discover and improve unforeseen opportunities, to resist unexpected temptations, and to bear patiently any affliction which may surprise us in the day on which we are entering.

I would advise you, after this, to read some portion of Scripture, particularly from those parts of the Bible which are of a more devotional and practical kind. Here, take such instructions as readily present themselves to your thoughts; repeat them over to your own conscience, and charge your heart religiously to observe them, and act upon them, under a sense of the divine authority which attends them. And if you pray over this part of revelation with your Bible open before you, it may impress your memory and your heart yet more deeply, and may form you to a copiousness and variety, both of thought and expression, in prayer.

It might be proper to close these devotions with a Psalm

or Hymn: and I rejoice with you, that through the pious care of Dr. Watts, and some other sacred poets, we are provided with so rich a variety, for the assistance of the closet and family on these occasions, as well as for the service of the sanctuary.

II. The most material directions which have occurred to me, relating to the *progress of the day*, are these: That we be serious in devotion; that we be diligent in business; that we be temperate, and prudent in recreations; that we carefully remark providences; that we cautiously guard against temptations; that we keep up a lively and humble dependence upon the divine influence, suitable to every emergency; that we govern our thoughts well in solitude, and our discourse well in conversation.

1. For *seriousness in devotion*, whether public or domestic, let us take a few moments, before we enter upon such solemnities, to pause, and reflect on the perfections of the God we are addressing, on the importance of the business we are coming about, on the pleasure and advantage of a regular and devout attendance, and on the guilt and folly of a hypocritical formality. When engaged, let us maintain a strict watchfulness over our own spirits, and check the first wanderings of thought. And, when the duty is over, let us immediately look back on the manner in which it has been performed, and ask our own consciences whether we have reason to conclude that we are accepted of God in it. For there is a certain manner of going through these offices, which our hearts will immediately tell us it is impossible for God to approve. And, if we have inadvertently fallen into it, we ought to be deeply humbled before God for it, lest our prayers become sin. Ps. 109 : 7.

2. As for the *hours of worldly business*, whether it be that of the hands, or whether it be the labor of a learned life, let us attend to the prosecution of it with a sense of God's authority, and with a regard to his glory. Let us avoid a dreaming, sluggish, indolent temper, which nods over its work, and does only the business of one hour in

two or three. In opposition to this, which runs through the life of some people, who yet think they are never idle, let us endeavor to despatch as much as we well can in a little time; considering that it is but a little we have in all. And let us be habitually sensible of the need we have of the divine blessing, to make our labors successful.

3. For *seasons of diversion*, let us take care that our recreations be well chosen; that they be pursued with a good intention, to fit us for a renewed application to the labors of life; and then that they be used only in subordination to the honor of God, the great end of all our actions. Let us take heed that our hearts be not estranged from God by them, and that they do not take up too much of our time: always remembering, that the faculties of human nature, and the advantages of the Christian revelation, were not given us in vain; but that we are always to be in pursuit of some great and honorable end, and to indulge ourselves in amusements and diversions no further than as they make a part in a scheme of rational and manly, benevolent and pious conduct.

4. For the *observation of providences*, it will be useful to regard the divine interposition, in our comforts and in our afflictions.

In our comforts, whether more common or extraordinary: that we find ourselves in continual health; that we are furnished with food for support and pleasure; that we have so many friends, and those so good and so happy; that our business goes on prosperously; that we go out, and come in, safely; and that we enjoy composure and cheerfulness of spirit, without which nothing else can be enjoyed. All these should be regarded as providential favors, and due acknowledgments should be made to God on these accounts, as we pass through such agreeable scenes.

On the other hand, Providence is to be regarded in every disappointment, in every loss, in every pain, in every instance of unkindness from those who have professed friendship. And we should endeavor to argue ourselves into a patien'

submission, from the consideration that the hand of God is always mediately, if not immediately, in each of them; and that if they are not properly the work of Providence, they are at least under its direction. It is a reflection which we should particularly make with relation to those little cross accidents, (as we are ready to call them,) and those infirmities and follies in the temper and conduct of our intimate friends, which else may be ready to discompose us. And it is the more necessary to guard our minds here, as wise and good men often lose the command of themselves on these comparatively little occasions; who, calling up reason and religion to their assistance, stand the shock of great calamities with fortitude and resolution.

5. For *watchfulness against temptations*, it is necessary, when changing our place or our employment, to reflect, "What snares attend me here?" And as this should be our habitual care, so we should especially guard against those snares which in the morning we foresaw. And when we are entering on those circumstances in which we expected the assault, we should reflect, especially if it be a matter of great importance, "Now the combat is going to begin; now God and the blessed angels are observing what constancy, what fortitude there are in my soul; and how far the divine authority, and the remembrance of my own prayers and resolutions, will weigh with me when it comes to a trial."

6. As for *dependence on divine grace* for influence, it must be universal; and since we always need it, we must never forget that necessity. A moment spent in humble, fervent breathings after the communications of the divine assistance, will do more good than many minutes spent in mere reasonings. And though indeed these should not be neglected, since the light of reason is a kind of divine illumination, yet still it ought to be pursued in a due sense of our dependence on the Father of lights, or where we think ourselves wisest, we may become vain in our imaginations. Rom. 1 : 21, 22.

Let us therefore always call upon God; and say, for instance, when we are going to pray, "Lord, fix my attention, awaken my holy affections, and pour out upon me the spirit of grace and of supplication!" Zech. 12 : 10. When taking up the Bible, or any other good book, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law! Psalm 119 : 18. Enlighten mine understanding, warm my heart. May my good resolutions be confirmed, and all the course of my life be in a proper manner regulated." When addressing ourselves to any worldly business, "Lord, prosper thou the work of mine hands upon me, Psalm 90 : 17, and give thy blessing to my honest endeavors." When going to any kind of recreation, "Lord, bless my refreshments. Let me not forget thee in them, but still keep thy glory in view." When coming into company, "Lord, may I *do*, and *get* good. Let no corrupt communications proceed out of my mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." Eph. 4 : 29. When entering upon difficulties, "Lord, give me that wisdom which is profitable to direct." Eccl. 10 : 10. "Teach me thy way, and lead me in a plain path." Psalm 27 : 11. When encountering temptations, "Let thy strength, O gracious Redeemer, be made perfect in my weakness." 2 Cor. 12 : 9. These instances may illustrate the design of this direction, though they are far from a complete enumeration of all the circumstances in which it is to be regarded.

7. For the *government of our thoughts* in solitude, let us accustom ourselves, on all occasions, to exercise a due command over our thoughts. Let us take care of those entanglements of passion, and those attachments to any present interest and view, which would deprive us of our power over them. Let us set before us some profitable subject of thought, such as the perfections of the blessed God, the love of Christ, the value of time, the certainty and importance of death and judgment, and the eternity of happiness or misery which is to follow. Let us also, at such intervals, reflect on what we have observed as to the state

of our own souls, with regard to the advance or decline of religion; or on the last sermon we have heard, or the last portion of Scripture we have read. It may be very useful to select some one verse of Scripture, which we had met with in the morning, and to treasure it up in our mind, resolving to think of that at any time when we are at a loss for matter of pious reflection.

8. Lastly, for the *government of our discourse* in company, we should take great care that nothing may escape us, which can expose us or our Christian profession to censure and reproach; nothing injurious to those that are absent, or to those that are present; nothing malignant or insincere; nothing which may corrupt; nothing which may provoke or mislead those about us. Nor should we, by any means, be content that what we say is innocent; it should be our desire that it may be edifying to ourselves and others. In this view, we should endeavor to have some subject of useful discourse always ready; in which we may be assisted by the hints given about furniture for thought, under the former head. We should watch for proper opportunities of introducing useful reflections; and if a pious friend attempt to do it, we should endeavor to second him immediately. When the conversation does not turn directly on religious subjects, we should endeavor to make it improving some other way. And in the pauses of discourse, it may not be improper to lift up a holy ejaculation to God, that his grace may assist us and our friends in our endeavors to do good to each other; that all we say and do may be worthy the character of reasonable creatures, and of Christians.

III. The directions for a religious *closing of the day*, which I shall here mention, are only two: Let us see to it, that the secret duties of the evening be well performed; and lie down on our bed in a pious frame.

1. For *secret devotion in the evening*, I would propose a method something different from that in the morning; but still, as then, with due allowance for circumstances, which may make unthought of alterations proper, I should advise

you to read a portion of Scripture, in the first place, with suitable reflections; then, to read a Hymn or Psalm: after this, to enter on self-examination, to be followed by a prayer to be formed on this review of the day. In this address to the throne of grace, it will be highly proper to entreat that God would pardon the omissions and offences of the day; to praise him for mercies temporal and spiritual; to recommend ourselves to his protection for the ensuing night; with proper petitions for others, whom we ought to bear on our hearts before him; and particularly for those friends with whom we have conversed or corresponded in the preceding day.

Before I quit this head, I must take the liberty to remind you, that self-examination is so important a duty, that it would be worth our while to spend a few words upon it. And this branch of it is so easy, that when we have proper questions before us, any person of a common understanding may hope to go through it with advantage, under the divine blessing. I offer you, therefore, the following queries, which I hope you will, with such alterations as you think requisite, keep near you for daily use.

"Did I awake as with God this morning, and rise with a grateful sense of his goodness? How were the secret devotions of the morning performed? Did I offer my solemn praises, and renew the dedication of myself to God, with becoming attention and suitable affections? Did I lay my scheme for the business of the day wisely and well? How did I read the Scriptures? Did it do my heart good, or was it a mere amusement? How have the other stated devotions of the day been attended, whether in the family or in public? Have I pursued the common business of the day with diligence and spirituality; doing every thing in season, and with all convenient dispatch, and as unto the Lord? Col. 3: 23. What time have I lost this day, in the morning, or the forenoon, in the afternoon, or the evening; and what has occasioned the loss of it? With what temper, and under what regulations, have the recreations of this day been

pursued? Have I seen the hand of God in my mercies, health, cheerfulness, food, clothing, books, preservation in journies, success of business, conversation, and kindness of friends? Have I seen it in afflictions, and particularly in little things which have a tendency to vex and disquiet me? Have I received my comforts thankfully, and my afflictions submissively? How have I guarded against the temptations of the day, particularly against this or that temptation which I foresaw in the morning? Have I maintained a humble dependence on divine influences? Have I lived by faith in the Son of God, Gal. 2 : 20, and regarded Christ this day as my Teacher and Governor, my Atonement and Intercessor, my Example and Guardian, my Strength and Forerunner? Have I been looking forward to death and eternity this day, and considered myself as a probationer for heaven, and, through grace, an expectant of it? Have I governed my thoughts well, especially in such or such an interval of solitude? How was my subject of thought this day chosen, and how was it regarded? Have I governed my discourses well in such or such company? Did I say nothing passionate, mischievous, slanderous, imprudent, impertinent? Has my heart this day been full of love to God, and to all mankind; and have I sought, and found, and improved, opportunities of doing and getting good? With what attention and improvement have I read the Scripture this evening? How was self-examination performed the last night; and how have I profited this day by any remarks I then made on former negligences and mistakes? With what temper did I then lie down, and compose myself?"

2. I conclude with noticing the sentiments with which we should *compose ourselves to sleep.* It becomes us to think of the divine goodness, in adding another day, and the mercies of it, to the former days and mercies of our life; to take notice of the indulgence of Providence, in giving us commodious habitations and easy beds, and continuing to us such health of body, that we can lay ourselves down at ease upon them, and such serenity of mind as leaves us any

room to hope for refreshing sleep—a refreshment, to be sought, not merely as an indulgence to animal nature, but as what our wise Creator, in order to keep us humble in the midst of so many infirmities, has been pleased to make necessary to our being able to renew his service with renewed alacrity. Thus may our sleeping, as well as our waking hours, be in some sense devoted to God. And when we are just going to resign ourselves to the image of death—to what one of the ancients beautifully calls *its lesser mysteries*—it is also evidently proper to think seriously of that end of all the living, and to renew those actings of repentance and faith which we should judge necessary, if we were to wake no more here.

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF A DAY.

1. Rise early, and begin it with God. Time waits upon each of us when we awake, and says, What wilt thou have me do to-day? Our answer to this inquiry is of no trivial importance.

2. We must have a plan, general and subordinate. Our great moralist, Johnson, remarks, "I believe it is best to throw life into a method, that every hour may bring its employment, and every employment have its hour. If every thing be kept in a certain place, when any thing is worn out or consumed, the vacuity which it leaves will show what is wanting; so, if every part of time has its appropriate duty, the hour will call into remembrance its engagement."

3. We must undertake no more than we can reasonably expect to perform, and do one thing at a time.

4. While we should avoid voluntary hinderances, if interruptions occur, instead of wasting our time in fruitless regret, we should endeavor to improve passing circumstances.

5. We must carefully gather up fragments. "Betwixt the more earnest employments and important occurrences of life there are several intervals, which, though in one day

they may be inconsiderable, yet in the whole time of a man's life they amount to a great deal of it. These uncertain intervals are often lost; either as not valued by most people, or neglected, though not despised, by good men, for want of skill to make use of them. As goldsmiths and refiners preserve the very sweepings of their shop, to save the filings of gold and silver, so a Christian ought to be very careful of those small portions of time which are more precious than metals."

6. We should aim at strict punctuality in engagements. A man who wants punctuality, not only wastes his own time, but often intrudes upon that of others, which may be still more valuable.

7. We must guard against a spirit of procrastination. The sacrifices under the Law were offered "as the duty of every day required;" "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." We must also be watchful over ourselves, lest a habit of unprofitable anxiety, as to the future, rob us of our time. Many hours are consumed in wild and groundless anticipations of evil.

8. To recall at night the transactions of the day, and endeavor to make the following a practical comment on the past, would be highly advantageous. To inquire, What has the day done for me? Has it set me nearer heaven? Has it brought an increase of knowledge and virtue? Has it been devoted to the service of God and man? Or, has it been spent in sloth, sensuality, or self-pleasing?

9. Should our active powers be suspended, and a season of languor and sickness intervene, there are still duties to be performed. Days of affliction are not *idle days*. "They who *sow* in tears shall reap in joy." He who goeth forth weeping, bearing "the precious seed" of faith, patience, prayer, submission, penitence, and hope, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him; and all who have diligently improved the talents committed to them, shall serve God when "*time shall be no longer*," without imperfection, without weariness, and without end.

No. 56.

BLIND ELLEN.

AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE.

In a little village on the sea-coast of Lancashire, lived a poor, lame, and blind old woman, whose habits of frugality and industry afford a useful example to persons in humble life; and whose cheerfulness, thankfulness, and submission to the providence of God, may be considered with advantage by persons in every station. She died December 1, 1808. She was blind from her sixth year, and had to maintain herself from very early life. The little cottage in which she lived, was her own; she had besides, about fifteen pounds, for which she received the interest; but this was not sufficient to buy her fuel. She supported herself by spinning silk for making ferret. By constantly laboring from Monday until Saturday, she earned only one shilling (sterling) a week. On this she contrived to live. Two shillings a year was all she laid out in flour. Clap-bread, which is made of oatmeal and water, was the chief article of her support. This is rolled into thin cakes, and baked on a stone over the fire, which poor Ellen performed without any help, making at once enough to serve her three or four weeks. A half-penny worth of milk served her for breakfast, and potatoes were her common dinner. An ounce of tea lasted her six weeks, as she seldom allowed herself to taste it but when she washed, and she rarely ever bought any meat.

She never begged any thing, not even of her neighbors; for she said, "God knows better what I want than I do myself, and he always sends what is needful for me." When she had neither bread nor potatoes for dinner, she made broth merely of an onion and a little pepper and salt; she then prayed to God that she might think it good, and she did think so. A murmur or complaint was never heard

from her lips; she said "she was always happy while she could go to church, be out of debt, and get any thing to live on." Her best gown had been bought *fifty years;* it was still whole, neat, and clean, and in this she made a very decent appearance; but it was put on only on sacrament days, and very fine Sundays. Ellen sometimes cheered herself at her wheel, by singing a psalm; and when she could have the word of God read to her, many parts of which she could repeat, she seemed to want no other joy. On receiving a little unexpected assistance, she seemed as if she knew not how to be grateful enough, and said, "I cannot be so thankful as I ought, but I must be as thankful as I can: I must thank God for sending such folks, for if he had not sent you, you would not have come."

She could only pray for her friends, she said, which she always did, begging that God would give all that was good for them in this world, and in the world to come, life everlasting. On taking leave, the person who had given her some assistance, wished her health. She replied, "Ay, either health or heaven."

Thus, without even the common comforts and blessings of life, passed the days of poor old Ellen. Those hopes and expectations which arise from the changing incidents of most situations, were not hers. The human smile could never cheer her heart, the voice of relative affection never delight her ear; no prospect of a brighter to-morrow beguiled the solemn solitude of the day; yet she was resigned, contented, cheerful, thankful for her existence; and when the purposes of this life should be fulfilled, she relied on the mercy of God, through the merits of her Saviour Jesus Christ, for the everlasting enjoyment of a better.

1. Few persons will read or hear this story, whose afflictions and poverty are so severe as poor blind Ellen's. Let such, therefore, consider, that they have now heard of one (and the eye of Providence sees many more) whose condition was much worse than their own, and yet of one, who was evidently an object of the peculiar care and goodness of God.

2. It is worthy to be considered, on what principle it was that poor Ellen was so contented and happy. This she plainly declared, when she said, "God knows better what I want than I know myself; and he always sends what is needful for me." It is impossible to be unhappy or unthankful, while such a sentiment as this influences the mind and is cherished in the heart. And whoever pays not this homage to the sovereignty of God, and is not sensible of the constant care and kindness of his providence, is little better than an atheist: whatever his *opinion* may be, he is, in fact, "living without God in the world." Eph. 2 : 12. Awful and dangerous state! Pray to be delivered from it.

3. What a good report would be secured to Christianity, instead of the slanders which are unjustly cast on it, if its professors would believe and act on that "faithful saying," mentioned by the apostle Paul, "that they who have believed in God, should be careful to maintain good works." Titus 3 : 8. All Christians *should* do this as the test of their sincerity, and at the peril of their salvation; and this did poor Ellen most eminently. She not only trusted in God for the supplying of all her wants, and believed that when she was in distress God would send some charitable person to relieve her; but she was also industrious, frugal, temperate, honest, and grateful. "Better is a *little* with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith." Prov. 15 : 16.

4. Remember that nothing but the grace of God made poor Ellen so contented, so cheerful, so industrious, so benevolent, and so happy. "By the grace of God," said the great apostle Paul, "I am what I am," 1 Cor. 15 : 10; and it was the same grace that influenced Ellen in the humble, dependent, and indigent state, in which Divine Providence placed her. How deplorable is a state of poverty and affliction without the grace of God! It is attended with murmuring, ingratitude, temptations to indolence and dishonesty, and despair of the goodness of God! How wretched and awful is such a condition! It has neither comfort nor hope for time or eternity. Contrast this with poor blind Ellen's

disposition and conduct, when, with a half-penny worth of milk for her breakfast, and a little onion-broth for her dinner, she sat and sung,

My Shepherd is the living Lord,
I therefore nothing need;
In pastures fair, near pleasant streams,
He setteth me to feed.

Lastly, observe, that Ellen, though so very poor, "was rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him." James 2 : 5. It is a fine answer that she gave to the person who wished her health: "Ay, either health or heaven." It is as if she had said, I hope and pray for health; but, if it please God to afflict me with sickness, my condition is so poor and so dependent, and I shall have so little to do with the world, that I wish for heaven. And I know what I wish for; heaven is a state of rest, holiness, and happiness. I know the ground on which I hope for it: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3 : 16. Through grace, I have believed in him. I have found "redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of my sins, according to the riches of his grace." I have committed my soul into his hands, because "he loved me, and gave himself for me." I have been enabled to love him, in a measure, and to obey him from the heart. I humbly trust, that I have experienced "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost." 2 Cor. 13 : 14. I do not cling to life; the fear of death is taken away from me; I long to see my Saviour; and therefore "I hope for heaven."

Reader, in whatever condition of life you are, pray that this may be your happy experience. Then, "whether you live, you will live unto the Lord; whether you die, you will die unto the Lord. And whether you live, therefore, or die, you will be the Lord's." Rom. 14 : 8.

No. 57.

DUTIES TO RELATIVES.

As it has pleased God to "let the tares and the wheat grow together till the harvest," many of the people of God are united in the closest relations to those who live "without God in the world." This is to many pious persons a source of severe trial, and to all it gives rise to the most sacred obligations to seek the salvation of their relatives. It is well to consider these obligations, and the means we may employ with the greatest hopes of success.

I. Consider the MOTIVES which should induce you to seek earnestly the conversion of your relatives.

1. In proportion as men increase in religion, they become more *kind and benevolent*. And when you feel that you have within you a soul worth more than worlds, and that its salvation is the one thing needful, can you look around, and feel no concern for those who are dear to you as your own life? Can you, on the one hand, love God above all, and on the other, love your brother as yourself, and yet see that God and they are awfully at variance, without longing to reconcile your friends to your God? When you look back upon the days of your unregeneracy, you blush for your guilt, and shudder at your danger: then is it possible to look at a wife, a brother, a child, in the same wretched state, and not desire that they should share your present bliss, saying, Be ye as I am, for I was as ye are? Where the flame of charity really exists, its first and most intense heat will be felt by those who are nearest us. We read in the Gospel, that as soon as Andrew becomes acquainted with Christ, he first finds his own brother Simon; and how natural! Wherever we see a professor of religion indifferent to the salvation of his relatives, our hearts express their suspicion, in the language of an apostle, "How dwelleth the love of God in him?"

2. The most effectual way to *avoid being injured* by our

irreligious relatives, is to seek their conversion. No sooner are we reconciled to God, by faith in the blood of his Son, than we find ourselves, in respect to the world, in an enemy's country. Exposed to snares and temptations, how shall we "escape the corruption that is in the world through lust?" Not by merely standing on the defensive. You must carry the war into the enemy's territory. While you are contented with preserving your own religion, they will be animated with the hope of leading such a timid, lukewarm Christian back again to the world and sin. But as soon as zeal for their conversion animates you, you are invigorated, and they are dispirited; they relax their attempts to corrupt you, in order to defend themselves from your efforts. Thus Colonel Gardiner's friends once said, "Come, let us call for another subject, for we had thought this man mad, and he is going to prove us all so in good earnest."

3. Is it not *God's design*, in placing us so near the unregenerate, that we may be the means of their conversion? Christ says to his disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth." In allusion to this language, it may be observed, that Christians are not cast all on one spot, but are so distributed in society as to resist the general corruption, and diffuse the savor of life. Jehovah says of his redeemed, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." He designs to make one of his people when renewed, the instrument of his mercy in calling another. And to whom have you such opportunities of being useful, as to those with whom you are intimate, to whom you enjoy free access, and with whose views and dispositions you are acquainted? Hence, one of a family is seldom converted, without being the means of winning more. "And how knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" Is it probable? Has God himself suggested the animating thought to awaken thy exertions? Delightful hope. To save the wife of thy bosom! To rescue from perdition the husband of thy youth! To beget to eternal life the fruit of

thine own body! To bestow the greatest and most durable bliss upon those for whose happiness thy bowels yearn with the strongest, tenderest emotions! How can we resist the influence of a hope so divine?

4. Great are the *rewards* which will crown your success in winning the souls of those who are related to you. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." James 5 : 19, 20. But the nearer a person lies to our heart, the greater must be our grief to see him a child of wrath, and the higher our delight to behold him reconciled to our religion and our God. For want of the additional bond of grace, how often the cords of nature jar, so that we feel our hearts more in unison with a stranger, who is "partaker of the like precious faith!" Ah! how painfully we feel the words of Christ verified: "I am come to set father against son, and son against father, mother against daughter, and daughter against mother; and a man's foes shall be those of his own household." But when a pious father sees his prodigal son return to God, hear how he shouts: "Rejoice with me; for this my son was dead, and is now alive again; he was lost, and is found." Grace adds to all the ties of nature a sweetness, tenderness, and force, before unknown. Now I rejoice to behold the happiness of my beloved relations secured for eternity. Should I see them bereft of reason, their interest in my Saviour's love continues the same. If death snatch them from my embrace, it shall not dissolve, but strengthen their union to Jesus Christ, my living Head. And when I hang over their cold remains, my heart shall not be rent with the pangs of everlasting separation, nor my distracted imagination follow them down to the regions of the damned: we sorrow not as those who have no hope, but knowing that those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him, we comfort one another with these words.

5. The motive, which is the life of every other, and

should be the end of them all, is, that in the conversion of your relatives, *the grace of Christ* will be magnified, and thus God glorified. For this we were created, for this we are new-created; and what else is worth living for? You justly reply, "Nothing; and this is worth dying for." What can more eminently glorify God than that disposition in you which cries to all around, "O, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

And should you see the desire of your soul in the conversion of sinners, what praise will rise to the Redeemer from their hearts and yours! Another instrument will then be found to glorify God in the world, an instrument which may again be expected to win others to Christ; so that at every fresh step, fresh glory shall be given to our God and King, and only eternity shall fully declare to what extent our feeble efforts may have promoted the glory of him to whom we owe our all. Let the glory of God in Christ appear to you in its true light, let it impress your hearts with all its weight, and the conversion of your relatives will be the object of your constant care.

II. Inquire by what MEANS you should aim at the conversion of your relatives.

1. Seek to be filled with holy, ardent *love* for their souls. How passionately the apostle expresses the feelings of his heart for his unbelieving brethren. Rom. 9: 1, 2. Nothing can be done unless the heart be first duly affected. Your zeal, not flowing sincerely from the fulness of the heart, when opposed by their depravity, will degenerate into bitterness, which defeats its own end. But the affections, always eloquent and ingenious, will suggest a thousand convincing arguments, and invent a thousand winning devices. Your love will endure the contradiction of sinners against yourselves, and by showing them that your desire for their welfare is sincere and unquenchable, you will steal into their breast in spite of themselves.

2. The suitable discharge of *every relative duty* is of the utmost importance, if you would win your kindred to the

love of Christ. An apostle exhorts Christian servants to *adorn* the Gospel of God our Saviour in all their conduct. And should not pious masters and mistresses, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, parents and children, by their exemplary conduct in every relation of life, adorn the Gospel of God our Saviour? What argument would be so convincing and persuasive? Actions have a voice louder than words. Ye husbands, who mourn over your unconverted wives, remember that in you tenderness and firmness should be united. Let not provocations extinguish the love which you ought to bear to those who are united to you in a bond which resembles the union of Christ and his church. Nor yet suffer the authority which you ought to maintain in your own house, to be trampled under foot; for you are not likely to be the more useful by displaying a merely negative character, which will render you contemptible. Wives, listen to the voice of God by his apostle. 1 Pet. 3: 1, 2. Parents, remember that your children inherit from you a depraved nature, and that you yourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures; therefore, be not bitter against your unconverted children. At the same time, recollect that God says, "I know Abraham, that he will *command* his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord." To accustom children to submit to the mild and amiable, yet firm, determined authority of a father, is a good introduction to religion, which requires absolute submission to divine authority. But to leave children to their own will, is to increase their natural indisposition to the Redeemer's yoke. Children, if you are privileged beyond your parents by having become believers in Christ, while they continue in unbelief, remember that grace does not cancel the bonds of nature; it is still said, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." In every thing that is not contrary to your allegiance to the Lord, let your obedience be exemplary, that it may be evidently seen that it is nothing but conscience which ever induces you to oppose a parent's wish. Imitate

the blessed Jesus, who, though the Lord of glory, became "subject to his parents."

3. The prudent and diligent use of *every proper means of instruction and persuasion* is necessary in order to bring our relatives to the knowledge of Christ. In the master of a family, there is no duty more incumbent, no means of usefulness more effectual, than constant family worship. Conduct it well; let it not be too long. Render it pleasant, instructive, and impressive. Where the husband has been averse, the wife has sometimes taken the children into her own room, and prayed with them. To such we may apply the words of the Redeemer: "She hath done what she could." Let parents diligently catechize their children. A wife may sometimes with propriety and success avow her conviction of the guilt and danger of her husband's state. When a pious woman was once asked, in the presence of her wicked husband, how she could so patiently endure all his provocations, she replied, "I consider that my husband has nothing but misery before him in the next world, and therefore I wish to make him as happy as I can in this." The husband was so struck, that he replied, "And do you think I must be miserable in the next world? Then, my dear, by the help of God, I will seek to flee from the wrath to come." Col. Gardiner was first impressed by a book which his pious mother packed up with his baggage when he went abroad. A book left open at a certain page, in the room of a relative, may strike effectually. To make a present, or a loan of a book, may do the same. The relation of an impressive anecdote has often been attended with a blessing. It may sometimes be proper to declare, with meekness and fear, what God hath done for us. But remembering that God hath ordained the preaching of the cross for salvation, exert all your influence to bring your unconverted relations under the ministry of the Gospel. And as you go up with them, pray, "O let the power of the Lord be present to heal them;" which leads me to observe,

4. Frequent *prayer* must crown all other means; for in

vain are all your exertions without a divine blessing. None but God can give life, either natural or spiritual. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase. By prayer you may do good to those who would not listen to your admonitions. When all your kindest efforts have been rejected by those on whom you have employed them to the utmost, retire to your closet, and there pour out your soul to God for them. Thus Abraham cried, "O, that Ishmael might live before thee." Thus Paul says, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved." Prayer moves the hand which holds all hearts, and turns them as the rivers of water.

Frequent intercession with God, earnestly beseeching him to forgive the sins of our fellow-men, to enlighten them, to bless them, and bring them to everlasting happiness, is the divinest exercise that the heart of man can be engaged in. It will make it pleasant to be courteous and condescending to all about us, and make us unable to say or do an unkind thing to them. There is nothing that makes us love a man so much, as *praying* for him. When you can do this sincerely for any man, you have fitted yourself for the exercise of generosity and tenderness, and for a far better behavior than what is commonly called *fine breeding*. By considering yourself an advocate with God for those around you, you will never find it hard to be at peace with them yourself.

If parents would make themselves intercessors with God for their children, nothing would be more likely to bless their children or to dispose their own minds to the performance of every thing excellent and praiseworthy. The state of parents is a holy state, and calls upon them, as priests of their own households, to offer up prayers for their children. If a parent, considering himself in this light, should be daily calling upon God, extending his intercessions as the circumstances and necessities of his children require, it would have a mighty influence upon his life. It would render him circumspect in the government of himself; prudent,

and careful of every thing he said or did, lest his example should hinder that which he so constantly desired in his prayers. How naturally would he grow ashamed of himself, wanting those virtues which he sought of God for his children! How tenderly, how religiously, how faithfully would he treat those whom he considered as his little spiritual flock, whose virtues he was to form by his example, encourage by his authority, nourish by his counsel, and prosper by his prayers!

Finally. Let your zeal be tempered with prudence, as well as kindled by love. If, after a time, you find all your well-meant efforts not only resisted, but perverted, it may be better to say but little, and labor to accomplish your desire chiefly by example and prayer. Yet never lose sight of the object. Let us rather deplore our guilt in neglecting it as we have done, so that one and another might have said, "No man careth for my soul." We, who would agonize to see them in pain or sickness, who would go through fire and water to procure a physician to heal their bodies, when on the verge of the grave; how have we suffered their immortal souls, which are infinitely more precious, to languish under the dominion of sin, and in danger of everlasting wrath! Lord, lay not this sin to our charge! But if you would prove that divine and holy love is shed abroad in your heart; if you would avoid being corrupted by your carnal relatives; if you would concur with the merciful design of God in your providential allotment; if you would imitate the example of Christ and his apostles, who labored for the salvation of their relatives; if you would alleviate the pangs of separation; if you would share in the delights of angels, and the prodigal's father, in rejoicing over the returning sinner; if you would glorify your God and Saviour; be it your study to win your relatives to the grace of Christ here, that you may be with them in glory for ever.

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THE

BLASPHEMING SAILOR RECLAIMED.

Jerry Creed was a remarkable man, both before and after his conversion to God. He was born at or near Gravesend, England, about the year 1753. His parents appear to have been strangers to the power of religion, and did not "train up their child in the way he should go." His moral and religious welfare was neglected.

Early in life he determined to become a sailor. He obtained a berth on board "The Marquis of Rockingham," and proceeded in that vessel to India. But, though men may flee from parents and friends, may forsake their native shores, they cannot escape from God. "He knoweth their down-sitting and their up-rising. He understandeth their thoughts afar off. He is acquainted with all their ways." Psalm 139. In his first voyage the vessel was cast away on the Malabar coast, when he lost every article that had belonged to him, and was left in a most destitute and forlorn condition: he was obliged to beg his way about four hundred miles across the country, when he reached a port, where he entered the king's service.

Increased dangers now attended his course. During the time he served in the navy he was in several severe engagements; yet though, in the storming of towns and in close conflicts with the enemy, he was exposed to the greatest perils, his life was mercifully preserved by the providence of that God whom poor Jerry never sought by prayer. On many of these occasions his comrades fell in great numbers around him, but his heart was unmoved with one grateful feeling for his own preservation. His "good luck," and "good fortune," were the only subjects that occupied his thoughts, while, like other sailors, he talked of the narrow escapes he had from the balls which flew thick about him.

He continued many years in the sea-service, and met

with a variety of striking instances of the providential goodness of God, but his mind was dark, and he regarded not his deliverer.

At length he became tired of a seafaring life, and left the service. He returned to Gravesend, where he married and settled, and for many years obtained his living as a waterman. Here he became the terror of the town and neighborhood. His character was always bad, but he now became notoriously depraved, and even a proverb among the people, who called him "*wicked* Jerry Creed." He commonly used the most blasphemous language, and frequently did "the swearer's prayer" proceed from his lips. It was a mercy for poor Creed that his heavenly Father was long-suffering towards him, not willing that he should perish, but that he should be brought to repentance. If God were to answer the prayers of profane swearers, what vast numbers would daily be doomed to hell!

When Creed was overcome with liquor, he became an ungovernable madman, and the peaceable inhabitants of the town frequently had their midnight repose disturbed by his noisy conduct in the streets.

His heart was enmity against God, and he displayed it by taking every opportunity of speaking against religious people. He was once in a passage-boat, where several on board, who were fond of singing, began a hymn of praise to God. This was more than Jerry could bear. All the vile corruptions of his heart were immediately roused. He was like one possessed of an evil spirit. He endeavored to overpower the voices of the singers by invoking the most horrid judgments from God upon them and upon himself. He found, however, that he was not regarded by the people; when he called a sculler, and left the passage-boat, declaring, "The psalm-singing gentry shall have no more of my company."

We find that in this world there is no agreement between "light and darkness." There is a decided hatred in the minds of sinners against the children of God. But is not this strange? is it not marvellous? It would not be

strange to speak reproachfully of them if they were the liars, the seducers, and the drunkards of this world; but these depraved creatures are the very persons that oppose the righteous. Who are the visitors of the sick, the distressed, and the dying? Who are the teachers of the ignorant young? Who feed the hungry and clothe the naked? Are they the blasphemers and the drunkards of the land? No! but the persons who are the objects of *their* hatred.

Creed declared, "The psalm-singing gentry shall not have my company." It is an awful thought that there will be an eternal separation "between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." Mal. 3 : 18. Many who are willing now to join in the language of Creed, would give ten thousand worlds to be numbered with the righteous in the hour of sickness and death, and amidst the awful realities of the judgment-day. But then it will be too late. Then the Judge will say, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." It will be an awful moment when fellow-drunkards, the seduced and the seducers, and all the wicked, shall meet together in hell. They must dwell together then, and their very union will be one source of their eternal misery. Let the reader remember the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Luke 16 : 19–31. He may despise the followers of Christ now: he will wish to be one of them hereafter.

The apostle Paul, when referring to his state before his conversion, says, "I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy." 1 Tim. 1 : 13. These words strikingly apply to the character of Jerry Creed. He was an enemy to God: but even blaspheming Creed found mercy. He was providentially guided to the shop of a pious man, who then resided in Old Gravel-lane, London. Creed was in a state of intoxication. He wished to purchase a small article, with which he was supplied. During the short time he remained in the shop, he uttered

the most awful imprecations. The pious tradesman pitied the condition of his unhappy customer; but thinking it useless to reason with a drunkard, put into his bosom the Tract "James Covey," with the remark, "My friend, you seem to be a wholesale dealer in sin;" and begged him to read the little book, should God spare his life till the morning. After getting aboard the vessel in which he was to return to Gravesend, he became sober, and found the Tract. He had not forgotten the short remark of the pious tradesman. He was anxious to know what the Tract contained. He sought a retired spot in the vessel, where, unobserved, he might gratify his curiosity. Whilst reading the account of Covey the Spirit of God opened the heart of poor Creed to receive the truth. He was struck to find his own character exactly described, and felt emotions altogether new to him. He put the Tract into his pocket, and longed to be quite alone, that he might read it again more carefully. He repeatedly pondered its contents, and the more he read, the more he felt convinced that he had been living in a state of awful rebellion against God. He formed a solemn resolution to alter his conduct, and began to pray for mercy.

On the Lord's day, after this providential visit to London, he resolved to go to the house of God. He had always neglected divine worship; but felt that he could do so no longer. It was, however, a trying time for poor Jerry: he had been in several battles, and his courage had never failed before the enemy; he had never feared the cannon-ball; but he found it hard work to take the first step in the ways of God. He feared persecution at first, though he had been so great a persecutor himself. However, on the Sabbath, when the people of God assembled, poor Creed resolved to unite with them. He slowly approached the place, when he found his mind agitated with a variety of feelings. He felt ashamed to enter the house of God, and therefore he loitered about until the service had commenced; and when he thought that the congregation were all assembled, he placed himself close to the inner door, where he could hear without being observed.

He continued this practice for several weeks, but feeling increasingly anxious about his soul, he determined to enter the sanctuary, that he might find the way of salvation. It was an interesting moment when "wicked Jerry Creed" was first seen there. He would sometimes place his elbows on the top of the pew, and supporting his head with his hands, keep his eye immovably fixed on the minister. Under the power of the word, the big tear would tremble in his eye, which he would dash away, but it was soon followed by another and another, which rolled in quick succession down his weather-beaten cheeks.

These were the tears of *repentance*. He felt that he had sinned against a kind and merciful Father. He wondered at the patience and forbearance of God towards him, a vile blasphemer. He could now recall, with grateful feelings, the events of his past history; he could adore the goodness of God, who had covered his head in the day of battle, and preserved him amidst the perils of the deep. At this time the sermons he heard were deeply impressed on his mind. He saw the way of salvation clearly revealed. In the Lord Jesus Christ he found the Friend he needed, one able and willing to save to the uttermost; and he was led to cry out, "Lord, save me, a poor lost sinner." The following lines describe the state of Creed's feelings at this time, and his firm reliance upon Christ as the Saviour of his soul:

Jesus, to thee alone I fly,
And wilt thou let a sinner die
Whilst trusting in thy sacred blood?
I seek no other way to God.

Thy tender heart will sure forgive,
And bid a trembling sinner live;
For all that come thy grace is free,
For Saul, and Magdalen, and me!

"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Luke 15. This joy was felt when Creed became a "new creature in Christ Jesus."

He became a constant attendant on public worship, and

soon found his way to the meetings for social prayer. A very perceptible change took place in his appearance and conduct: instead of rolling about the streets in a state of filthy intoxication, bellowing out the most awful oaths, and calling for destruction on his own soul and the limbs of any who happened to pass near him, he became sober in his habits, pure in his language, and cleanly in his person.

Some features of his character deserve special attention.

He was anxious to *obey the Divine commandments*. The law to him was a rule of life, though he depended for salvation entirely on the finished work of the Redeemer. He *refused to work on the Sabbath*. As a waterman he had often earned more money on that holy day than during all the rest of the week. He was so decided in his attachment to the Sabbath, that neither gain nor the scoffs and taunts of his former companions could move him to act contrary to the dictates of his conscience. He would not spend that day in the pursuit of worldly things, which God had commanded to be kept holy.

Creed found the truth of the Divine word, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." When he was about sixty-six years of age, and considerably weakened in constitution, so as to be unable to go through much labor, he was providentially placed above want. A relative left him an annuity of £25; this, added to a former one of £10, and the small daily earnings by his boat, furnished him and his afflicted wife with all the earthly comforts they actually required.

Creed displayed the meekness of the Christian, *when he was persecuted* for righteousness' sake. He had much to bear from the watermen around him. He often found their sneers and reproaches very trying. Although his natural temper was impetuous and irritable, yet it was the testimony of many who daily witnessed his provocations, that they never once heard him speak unguardedly, or use an expression unbecoming a Christian.

Creed was a man of ready wit. He was once in the

street in Gravesend, when a masonic procession passed along. The good man stood in a doorway to avoid the crowd. He was observed by one in the procession who had been an old companion in wickedness. As he passed the spot where Creed was standing, he called out sarcastically, "Jerry, is Jesus Christ a mason?" In a moment the good man meekly but sweetly answered, "Yes, my friend, for 'Behold, he has laid in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.'" 1 Peter, 2 : 6.

The opposition that Creed met from his former companions in sin, reminded him of his own conduct towards the people of God, when in the enmity of his heart he was foremost to persecute and traduce them, and now he availed himself of every opportunity of doing his persecutors good. He would invite and persuade them to accompany him to the house of God, hoping that the truth might become "the power of God to their salvation." By pursuing this Christian course, he lived to see persecution give way, and he became respected and loved by all. The uniform consistency of his Christian character constrained many who hated his religion to confess that it had made him a better man. It was the unspeakable happiness of Creed to see several of his greatest opponents become the humble followers of the divine Redeemer.

Creed was evidently become a "light set on a hill," "an epistle of Christ." 2 Cor. 3 : 3. His Master's enemies took knowledge of him that he had been with Jesus. The most stout-hearted sinner could not but admire the firm, unshaken conduct of this reclaimed blasphemer.

Creed displayed much self-denying *liberality in the cause of Christ*. He loved his Master, and was willing to do all in his power to advance his truth in the world. He had a tender conscience, and always seemed to act as in the presence of the heart-searching God. He was once placed in very peculiar circumstances for the trial of his Christian principles; but they raised him high above "the love of money, which is the root of all evil." The kind relative

who left him the annuity of £25, devoted an estate, producing about £80 annually, to five benevolent institutions; but dying within one year, the whole, by the English statute of mortmain, reverted to Jerry Creed. "I see plainly," said he, "that *the law* gives this estate to me; but *the Gospel* gives it to the religious charities, and I wont have it. I am happy that it is to be spent in the cause of my Redeemer." No one can read this fact without admiring the effect of God's grace in this good man.

The evidences furnished of the character of Creed clearly show that he had become a true Christian. His heart was changed. He was born again by the Spirit of God. Every act of his life testified that he had been "called out of darkness into marvellous light." He continued until the close of his days to exhibit in his spirit and conduct the transforming and sanctifying influences of divine truth. He grew in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The longer he was in the world, the closer was his "walk with God." He appeared to be daily ripening for heaven; and at length, like a shock of corn fully ripe, he was gathered into the garner of God. He was subject to an asthmatic affection, but was able to attend public worship on the evening before his death, though he complained of difficult breathing. It was then the close of a long day, and the aged warrior laid himself down to rest. Before the morning sun arose, his spirit, released from the body, had joined "the just made perfect before the throne of God."

Thus the old sailor honorably finished the voyage of life. He made not shipwreck of his faith. He met with many storms and tempests, but "God was his refuge and strength." He has reached "the desired haven, where the weary find eternal rest." His mortal remains were placed in the burying-ground of Princes-street chapel, Gravesend. Over the grave is a monumental stone, on which there is written this appropriate inscription: "BUT I OBTAINED MERCY."

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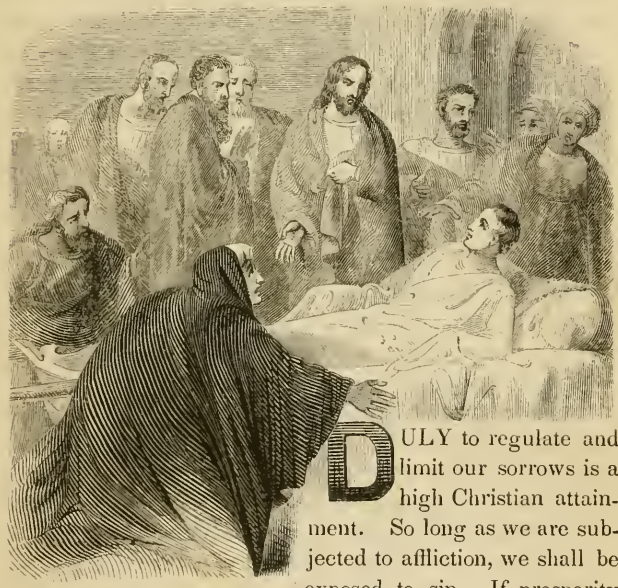
A

GIFT FOR MOURNERS.

AND WHEN THE LORD SAW HER, HE HAD COMPASSION ON HER, AND SAID TO HER, WEEP NOT.—LUKE 7:13.



DULY to regulate and limit our sorrows is a high Christian attainment. So long as we are subjected to affliction, we shall be exposed to sin. If prosperity has its peculiar snares, so has adversity.

The text exhibits an instance of sorrow which excited the compassion of our Saviour, and which he, at the same time, tenderly represses. The circumstances of the case are strikingly described in the context. "Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow."

Every circumstance was piercing to the heart. It was the death of a *son*. To bury *any* child is grievous to an affectionate parent; but a son is expected to continue the name, and support the family. To bury a son, therefore, is usually esteemed peculiarly afflictive.

This son was a *young man*. Had he died in infancy, before affection was riveted, or expectation raised, the affliction had been less pungent. But death seized him in his flower and prime; at the very age which rendered him capable of realizing to a fond mother the hopes of many years, and of rewarding her for a thousand cares and labors.

Further, he was the *only* son of his mother. All her affections, hopes, and comforts centred in this one object. If to part with one child out of many is afflictive, what is it to lose *all in one?*

To complete the affliction, the bereaved mother was a *widow*. In this condition, not only devoid of comfort, but exposed to oppression and to contempt, her staff, her solace, her safeguard, were at once removed. She had no husband to say to her, as Elkanah to Hannah, "Why is thy heart grieved? Am not I more to thee than ten sons?" Her grief was not a solitary grief; and the last calamity at once revived and aggravated the former.

Observe the treatment which this weeping widow received from Jesus Christ.

He met her at the gate of the city, not accidentally, but with the express design to work a miracle of mercy for her relief. There *he saw her*, and *he had compassion on her*. Surely, her griefs were not few nor small. But greater still, and more multiplied were the compassions they excited in the heart of Jesus.

Christians, your Redeemer is now exalted to heaven, and you *see him not*. But his eye is ever on you. Nor is he less sensibly touched with the infirmities and griefs of his people than when he tabernacled in flesh.

Observe particularly the *counsel* given to this disconsolate widow, by him who "comforteth those who mourn." "*Weep not.*" This is not an absolute prohibition of sorrow, nor of tears. Christ does not condemn all expressions of grief for deceased friends as sinful. He would not have his people insensible. But he prohibits the excess and extravagance of their sorrow. He would not have them mourn for the dead like heathen, who know not the consoling doctrine of the resurrection.

The resurrection of her son from the dead was the great instrument of comfort to the mourning widow. Well might the Saviour say, "Weep not," when he intended so soon to remove the cause of her tears.

The case was peculiar and extraordinary. Mourners may not now expect to receive back their deceased friends. Such miraculous interpositions, with their occasion, have ceased. The omnipotence and divinity of the Saviour have long since received the most ample confirmation. Yet, even now, the surviving friends of those who have *died in the Lord*, have the strongest grounds of consolation.

Our principal relief and comfort in the death of friends, is drawn from the *general* resurrection. Thence the apostle derives it. 1 Thess. 4: 17, 18. We shall see and enjoy our pious friends again, at the coming of the Lord. Surely, this is more than if we should *now* receive them immediately from the dead.

Our Saviour's counsel to this mourner applies, then, to Christian mourners at large; and it furnishes us this important instruction: THAT CHRISTIANS OUGHT TO MODERATE THEIR SORROW FOR THEIR DECEASED RELATIVES, WHATEVER AFFLICTIVE CIRCUMSTANCES MAY ATTEND THEIR DEATH.

What I propose, is, to exhibit the signs of immoderate sorrow; to dissuade from its indulgence; to refute its pleas, and to point out its remedy.

I. In exhibiting the signs of immoderate sorrow, I will

first state HOW FAR GRIEF MAY BE INDULGED. Thus we shall more easily see when it becomes excessive and sinful.

1. The afflicted must be indulged in *an awakened and tender sense of God's afflicting hand.* To bear what we do not feel, is no virtue. Not to tremble when God smites, is most unbecoming. To make light of his corrections, is awful stupidity. For this the afflicted are rebuked, Jer. 5 : 3 : "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved." When God smote Job in his person, his children, and estate, he rent his mantle and prostrated himself in the dust. This showed that he was not insensible. But he blessed an afflicting God. This showed that he was not stubborn and unsubmissive.

2. The afflicted must be allowed, within due limitation, to *complain both to God and man.* It more becomes a Christian ingenuously to open his sorrows, than sullenly to smother them. There is no sin in complaining to God, though there is much in complaining of him. The griefs of the heart are frequently relieved by utterance. This was David's resort: "I poured out my complaint before him ; I showed before him my trouble." Ps. 142 : 2. To whom should children go to make their moan, but to their father ? Whence may they expect relief and comfort but from him ? Happy were it, might every afflicted soul make this experiment. Did we complain more to God, he would complain less of us, and quickly send relief. O, how moving, how prevalent is it with God, when his poor, burdened people fly to him in their distress ! When deep calls to deep, when one wave urges on another, then let the distressed soul address to the throne of heaven such language as this: "Father, what shall I do ? My soul is bowed down with trouble. Thou hast multiplied my sorrows. I have neither outward comfort nor inward peace. Wherever I look for relief I am disappointed. O Lord, I am oppressed ; undertake for me. Fathers of the flesh pity their distressed children when they

complain to them; and wilt not thou, O Lord, have pity, whose compassion as far exceeds the compassion of creatures, as the sea exceeds a drop? O, my Father! pity me, support me, deliver me!" Such appeals are acceptable to God and advantageous to the soul.

We may also make our complaint to man. Job did so: "Have pity upon me," says he, "have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me." It is a great mercy if we have friends who are wise, faithful, and experienced. They are born for such a time as this. Prov. 17: 17. Still, they cannot pity as God, nor relieve and succor as he. Often we may say with Job, chap. 21: 4, "As for me, is my complaint to man? And if it were, why should not my spirit be troubled?" "What great advantage in these complaints? I may burden the heart of my friend; but I get little ease for my own." Yet the opening of the heart to an experienced, tender Christian, is some relief; and to engage his prayers is still more important.

3. The subject of affliction may ordinarily *judge and condemn himself as the guilty procurer of his own troubles.* Rarely does a great affliction befall a good man, but he saw, or might have seen, the need of such a rod, before he felt it. Has God smitten your child or friend, and might you not have anticipated the stroke? Were you not in such a carnal frame as to need the rousing, purifying influence of affliction? But whether you anticipated the trial or not, it is now your duty to examine yourself. "Let us search and try our ways," says the afflicted church. In the day of trouble a gracious soul is inquisitive about nothing more than the *cause* of the divine frowns. "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." "Lord, what is the particular corruption which this rod is designed to rebuke? For what sinful neglect would it humble me? O, discover it to me, and reclaim me from it!"

Having discovered the cause of their trouble, sincere

souls will take shame to themselves, and give glory to God, by humble submission, and by vindicating the equity of the divine conduct. "I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men?" "Holy men," says one, "after their hearts are renewed by repentance, are not ashamed to remember and confess their faults, to the glory of God; for they account not that glory as lost, which is transferred from themselves to their Maker."

It is true, God may afflict in sovereignty; or simply for our trial. But we may always see in ourselves cause enough for the affliction; and it is safe to charge it to our own sinful folly.

4. The afflicted Christian may *earnestly, though humbly and submissively, plead for relief*. When affliction presses us above our strength; when it disables us for duty, or gives advantage to the tempter, we may adopt the prayer of David: "Remove thy stroke from me." Even Christ, in the day of his trouble, poured out his soul with strong cries and many tears, saying, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me." Oppressed nature desires relief; and even our renewed nature seeks exemption from those incumbrances which retard us in duty, or expose us to sin.

Thus far mourners may indulge their grief. But sorrow becomes EXCESSIVE AND SINFUL,

1. When it *causes us to disregard remaining mercies and enjoyments*. Often the setting of one comfort obscures and benights all the rest. Our tears for enjoyments lost, blind us to the many mercies which remain. But this is very sinful. It involves ignorance, ingratitude, and great provocation.

It is a sin springing from *ignorance*. Did we know the desert of our sin, we should rather wonder that one mercy is left, than that many are withdrawn. Did we know that Sovereign Being at whose command our comforts come and

depart, and who can in a moment destroy all which remain, and ourselves with them, we should more highly value the mercies which he spares, and be more thankful for them. Did we know the case of thousands, perhaps far better than ourselves, who in all their lives never knew such enjoyments as we still possess and yet overlook, we could not think thus lightly of our mercies.

And what vile *ingratitude* is this! Are all your remaining mercies worth nothing? You have buried a child, a friend; but still you have a husband, a wife, other children, and friends. If you have not, you have comfortable accommodations, and health to enjoy them. Or, if not thus favored, you have the ordinances of God, and, it may be, an interest in Christ and in the covenant, the pardon of sin, and hopes of glory. And can you sink into despondence, as if all your mercies, comforts, and hopes, in both worlds, were buried in one grave? Must *Ichabod* be written upon your best mercies, because mortality is written upon one?

In a word, such a temper tends to *provoke the Holy One* to proceed in judgment till he has made a full end of your comforts. What if God should in just anger withdraw those undeserved, disregarded favors which you still possess? What if he should commission death to smite a husband, a wife, or children yet left? What if he should send sickness, losses, poverty, reproach? If, indeed, you are out of Christ, you are in danger of what is far more dreadful than all this. What if God should say, "Dost thou undervalue my goodness and forbearance? Is it nothing that I have spared thee thus long in thy sins and rebellion?" And what if he should stretch out his hand and cut the thread which has kept thee, for so many years, from dropping into endless misery?

O, think how dangerous it is to provoke the Lord by ingratitude, when he has already come out in judgment. If you are in the number of his own people, of those who will

finally be saved, you know you have better mercies to lose than any you have yet lost. Should it please God to cloud your soul with doubts; should he let loose Satan to buffet you, and should he remove all inward peace and joy, you would soon be convinced that the funeral, even of your dearest friend, was comparatively a small thing.

2. Our sorrows are sinful when they *so entirely absorb our minds that we are insensible to the calamities which afflict the church and people of God.* Some Christians have such a public spirit, that the troubles of the church swallow up their personal afflictions. Melancthon was so much oppressed by the calamities of the church, that he took comparatively little notice of the death of a most beloved child. Eli manifested a gracious and public spirit, when he received the intelligence that Israel had fled before the Philistines, that his two sons were dead, and that the ark of God was taken. Had the message stopped at the death of his sons, he might have supported the burden. But at the mention of the *ark of God*, even before the narration was finished, he presaged the issue, and immediately sunk down, and died. The loss of the ark was more to him than that of sons and daughters.

But how rare, in this selfish generation, is such a public spirit, even among professors of religion. May we not complain with the apostle, Phil. 2: 21, "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's?" Few extend their cares beyond the sphere of their private interests. And the *sorrows* of most are not less confined at home. If a child die, we are ready to die with it; but public calamities afflict us little. How few are there who *lose* either their domestic comforts in the church's troubles, or their domestic troubles in the church's mercies. Now, when it is thus, when we little regard the mercies or sufferings of others, but are wholly absorbed by our own afflictions, our sorrow is sinful.

3. Our sorrows are excessive and sinful when they

divert us from our duties, or distract us in them. How prone are we to indulge solitary and protracted musings concerning a departed friend; yet how hard to fix our thoughts on the living God! When our hearts should be in heaven with our Saviour, they are in the grave with our dead. May not many afflicted souls justly complain that their troubles have taken away their Saviour—I mean in regard to sensible communion—and placed the lifeless child in his room? Ah, cease to weep longer for your deceased relation, and weep rather for your dead heart. Is this your compliance with the design of your afflicting God? Will you become more a stranger to him than before? Is this the way to comfort—to refrain prayer, and turn your back on God? Or if you dare not wholly neglect the duty, yet your affliction mars your success. Your heart is wandering and distracted in prayer and meditation, so that it affords you neither comfort nor relief.

O, Christian, consider this is not right. Surely the rod operates not kindly now. Did your love to God expire when your friend expired? Is your heart as cold in duty as his body in the grave? O, banish this temper without delay, lest you find, by sad experience, that what you now mourn is inconsiderable, compared with what you will mourn hereafter. To lose the spirituality and warmth of your affections, is much more than to lose the wife of your bosom, or the loveliest child that ever a fond parent laid in the grave.

Reader, if this be your case, you may challenge the first place among mourners. It were better for you to bury ten sons, than remit one degree of love to God, or delight in him. His end in smiting was to bring your heart nearer to him, by removing what estranged it. Will you thwart this merciful design? Surely, the troubles which accompany you to the closet, and mar its duties, are extravagant and sinful. The case is the same,

4. When *your sorrows so oppress and sink your animal frame as to endanger life, or unfit you for active duties.* "The sorrow of the world worketh death;" that is, the sorrow of worldly men, sorrow merely natural and carnal, and not relieved by spiritual reasonings and considerations. This sorrow is sometimes so oppressive that the body sinks under its weight, and diseases are induced, which are never removed. Excessive grief has ever been considered by physicians one of the principal causes by which human life is shortened. Its subjects have no mercy on their own frames; for while they indulge without restraint in the enervating luxury of grief, they frequently deny themselves the comfort of sleep, and other necessary refreshments.

This is very sinful, and highly displeasing to God. In his great mercy he would not have us "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow," even though that sorrow be for sin. 2 Cor. 2: 7. How much more would he have us restrain our griefs for temporal losses! Indeed, are there not other and better purposes to which our health and energies may be devoted? May not the time come when we shall earnestly wish we had that strength to spend for God, which we now prodigally and unavailingly waste upon our troubles?

5. Our affliction is sinful when it *sours the spirit, and excites inward murmurings against God.* Whatever God does with us, or ours, we should maintain honorable thoughts of him. A gracious heart cleaves closer to God in affliction, and justifies him in his severest strokes. "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right"—such is its language—"and that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me." In this way the soul may obtain comfortable evidence of its own uprightness. To have affectionate thoughts of God when he smites us in our dearest comforts, argues that we love him for himself, and not for his gifts only. It argues that his interest in the heart is deeper than any earthly interest. And the comfort which some have derived from such dis-

coveries of their own hearts in severe affliction, has been so great, that they would not part with it to have all their lost blessings restored.

But to swell with secret discontent, and indulge hard thoughts of God, as though he had treated us with injustice, or with unparalleled severity—this is a vile temper; evil fruit from the evil root of a carnal, ignorant, proud heart; at least, from a heart much distempered, if ever renewed. Thus it was with Jonah when God smote his gourd.—"I do well," said he, "to be angry, even unto death." This was not his ordinary frame, but a surprise; the effect of a paroxysm of temptation, and of passions overheated. Few dare utter such language. But many have their hearts imbittered by discontent and secret risings against the Lord. *This*, if ever their eyes are opened, will cost them more pain than they ever felt from the affliction which occasioned it.

6. Our sorrows exceed due bounds when *we voluntarily excite and exasperate them*. It is strange that we should find pleasure in stimulating our grief into exercise. Yet there is truth in the remark of Seneca, that sorrow itself has a kind of delight attending it. The Jews who came to Mary's house to comfort her, "when they saw that she went out hastily, followed her, saying, She goeth to the grave, to weep there;" "as those do," says Calvin, "who seek to provoke their troubles by going to the grave, or often looking upon the dead."

Thus we delight to look upon the relics of our deceased friends, and often to mention what they have done or said; and this, not so much for the purpose of instruction or imitation, but rather to draw fresh blood from our wounds by piercing ourselves anew. Many parents will converse for hours on the features, actions, and remarks of their deceased children, weeping at the recital; and thus causelessly keeping open the wound for months after its infliction, and excruciating their hearts without benefit. Perhaps a lock

of hair, or something similar, is preserved, the sight of which may daily renew their grief.

I am far from recommending an inhuman forgetfulness of our dear departed relatives. It is as reprehensible as this childish, unprofitable remembrance. Oh, friends, we have other things to do in affliction than these! Were it not better to search our hearts and houses when God's rod is upon us, and study how to answer its designs, by mortifying and putting away the sins which provoked it? Surely, till we are thus employed, affliction has not accomplished its end.

7. Our sorrows are sinful *when they shut our ears against seasonable instructions and consolations.* Thus "Rachel wept for her children, and refused to be comforted, because they were not." So pertinacious are many in the indulgence of grief, that no counsel, no comfort can find its way to their minds. Some display a perverse ingenuity in evading every argument of comfort. Even if driven from every plea, they are still immovably fixed in their grief. Every consolation administered is disregarded or forgotten. Their feelings are those of the Psalmist, Ps. 77: 2, "My soul refused to be comforted."

To want comfort in the time of trouble aggravates affliction; but to refuse it when offered, is sin. The time may come when, however welcome a word of support might be, it will be denied. It is a great mercy to the afflicted to have with them a *Barnabas, an interpreter, one among a thousand.* And it is their great sin and folly to spill, like water on the ground, those cordials which are presented them. Say not with those desponding souls, Lam. 3: 18, "Our hope is perished from the Lord; remembering our affliction and misery, the wormwood and the gall." It is sad indeed, that a Christian should be so disgusted with the wormwood and gall of affliction as to be unable to relish the sweetness to be found in Christ and the promises.

Thus having pointed out the sin and danger of mourners, I am,

II. To DISSUADE them from these forbidden excesses, and to inculcate a temperance in their sorrow.

I know how difficult is the task to silence grief, and allay the tumult of passion. The very attempt sometimes causes it to rage and swell the more. The work is the Lord's. Its success depends entirely on his power and blessing. He who says to the stormy ocean, "Be still," can compose the tumults of the afflicted bosom.

Sorrow goes its destined round, and visits all characters without distinction. The righteous and the wicked pass, in their turn, under the rod. I am a debtor to both; and shall endeavor to afford to both support and assistance. Surely, the unregenerate need our compassion and aid. Their affections to their relatives, though irregular, are strong and tender. Their bereavements are felt with pungent emotions; nor must they be left to sink under their sorrows.

We cannot, indeed, directly offer them those reviving cordials which are found in Christ and in the covenant, for God's afflicted people. They have no interest in Christ nor in the promises. If this be your case who read these lines, afflicted and unsanctified, mourning bitterly for deceased friends, and having more cause to mourn for a dead soul; Christless and graceless, as well as childless or friendless; full of trouble, yet without faith or prayer to ease your heart; alas, your case is sad! yet do not wholly sink, nor suffer yourself to be swallowed up of grief. You have laid your beloved in the grave, yet do not precipitate yourself into the grave after him. This will be no remedy for your grief. Be entreated to ponder these *three* things:

1. Of all persons in the world, you have most reason to be tender of life and health, and careful to preserve them;

for if your troubles destroy you, you are eternally lost, undone for ever. *Worldly sorrow works death.* And if it works your death, it works your perdition too. If a believer dies, the second death has no power over him. But woe to you if death overtakes you in your sins. Beware, then, what you do against health and life. Be cautious of breaking that thread by which you hang over endless burnings. It is better to be childless or friendless on earth, than hopeless or remediless in hell.

2. Acknowledge and admire the distinguishing goodness of God to you, that when death was commissioned to smite one in the family, you were passed by. Your husband, wife, or child is taken, and you are left. Had your name been in the commission, you had now been beyond the reach of hope.

But O, the sparing mercy, the wonderful long-suffering of God to you! Perhaps the relative you have lost never provoked God as you have done. Your departed child may never have abused such mercies, or neglected such calls as you, nor treasured up the thousandth part of your guilt. Astonishing patience of God! You are warned, but not smitten. Is there nothing in this which claims thankful acknowledgment? Is it not better to mourn on earth, than to mourn in the regions of despair? Is it not easier to go to the grave of a deceased friend and weep there, than to be banished where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever?

3. This affliction, which seems so grievous, may prove your greatest, richest mercy. God has now *made your heart soft with trouble.* He has shown you how vain is this world, and how poor the sources to which you looked for happiness. A dark cloud overshadows all your earthly comforts. Should the Lord graciously interpose, and by this affliction open your eyes to your own deplorable state, and divorce your heart for ever from a vain, unsatisfying

world, and bring you to choose Christ, the only real and permanent good, for your portion, what an unspeakable mercy! Should your affliction imbitter sin; should the death of your friend turn your attention inward upon your soul—a soul as cold to God, and things spiritual, as a dead body, and more loathsome to Infinite Purity; surely, this would be a happier day than you have yet seen. Such is sometimes the merciful method of heaven. "If they be bound in fetters, and holden in cords of affliction; then he showeth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded: he openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity." Job 36 : 8–10.

Consider, pensive mourner, that which stole your heart from God is gone. That which engrossed your time and thoughts, and left no room for Christ and eternal realities, is gone. All your high-raised expectations from that beloved object which now moulders in dust, are perished in a day. What a motive, what an *advantage*, to raise your thoughts to heaven! Should a blessing attend the rod, this day of sadness will occasion you many a day of thanksgiving.

Be entreated to consider these things. Other consolations I cannot offer you while withholding your heart from Christ. Alas! the best of consolations are those which your present spiritual condition excludes. They belong to the people of God. They spring from that religion to which you are now a stranger. Yet, while I turn from you to Christians, and point out those richer comforts which belong to them, it is proper that the subject should be seriously considered by you. You will thus be convinced how privileged, how happy, are the children of God, amidst their greatest outward trials. You will perceive what is that *peace* which those who repent of sin, and roll all the burdens of their hearts upon him who careth for them, may enjoy amidst all the tribulations of the world.

Such I may attempt to counsel and comfort with ani-

mated hopes of success. You fear the Lord. You tremble at his word. To you the greatest affliction is not so formidable as the least sin. You would rather bury all your children, than provoke or grieve your heavenly Father. Your relatives are dear; but Christ is far dearer. Retire, then, to your closet; redeem a little time from sorrow; and implore the blessing of God on the following considerations:

1. *The Author of your affliction is God. It therefore becomes you meekly to submit.* "Be still, and know that I am God." The single thought that *the Lord has done it*, should silence every objection. "Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters." For a creature to quarrel with the God who made him, is shocking. May not he who formed you and yours, dispose of both as he sees best? May he not do what he will with his own? Say, then, with Eli, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." Bow to the holy sovereignty of that God who does his pleasure among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of earth. Turn your eyes away from your affliction to the perfect and unerring Author. Consider who he is, and what you are. Pursue the contemplation, till you can say from the heart, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

2. *The comforts of which you are deprived, were not your principal comforts.* Children and other relatives are common blessings, bestowed promiscuously on the friends of God and his enemies. Indeed, the wicked have often in these respects the advantage of the pious. It is a mistake to consider our happiness as necessarily connected with these created enjoyments. We may be happy without them. Our dearest relatives are not our chief good. They may all fail us, and yet our souls be both safe and comfortable. And as God hath better comforts for his people than these, he can send greater afflictions than the loss of

them. Had he spared your children, and indulged you with outward prosperity, and at the same time inflicted spiritual judgments on your soul, how much more mournful had been your condition! Remember, it was not the Saviour's design to purchase for you a sensual happiness, a life of earthly comforts; but to redeem you from all iniquity, to sanctify your nature, to wean your heart from this vain world, and so to order your lot, that finding no rest on earth, you might sigh and pant for that rest which remains to the people of God. And are not afflictions excellently calculated to promote this gracious design? Is it not a mercy to be deprived of those objects, however dear, which were so many clogs and incumbrances in your journey to heaven?

3. *However early or unexpected was the dissolution of your friends, you enjoyed them every moment allotted by Heaven.* Before your lamented relative was born, the time of your mutual enjoyment, and your separation was unalterably fixed in the decrees of Heaven. To you, indeed, this period was a secret while your friend lived. But now, it is made manifest by the event. Nor was it possible that his life could be either protracted or abbreviated a single moment.

This assertion is amply justified by the explicit testimony of Scripture; particularly by the passage, Job 14: 5: "His days are determined; the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds, which he cannot pass." A firm conviction of this truth will conduce much to your peace, and will shield you from many a useless and agonizing reflection.

How common for survivors to wish that this had been done, and that omitted! How common to think, that but for such mistakes or oversights, the dear husband, wife, or child had still lived! But, no; the Lord's time had come; and all things concurred to accomplish his pleasure.

Still, let it be remembered that the decree of God nowise excuses voluntary neglects. These things he overrules to accomplish his own purposes; but he does not approve them. Yet, the consideration of his governing providence affords great relief in view of those unavoidable mistakes which sometimes occur in the treatment of the sick.

Parents, you never had a thought that your dear children were *born* too soon. Why, then, should you regret that, at the appointed hour and moment, they should be delivered by death into a better life? Nor let any say that the death of their children is *premature*. Those whom God intends to bring early to heaven, he can ripen for that blessed region in ways inconceivable to us. Though cut off in the bud, they may be still mature. Remember that the seasons of the year are not more wisely or more unalterably fixed, than the seasons of your comfort in children and other earthly friends.

4. *Whatever may be your grief for the death of your children, it might have been still greater from their life.* Bitter experience led a good man once to say, It is better to weep for ten children dead, than for one living. What a heart-piercing affliction was David's! "Behold," says he, "my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life." How many parents have had their lives imbittered or shortened by the misconduct of children!

True, your love to your children will scarcely admit the thought of this as possible in your own case. They appeared innocent and amiable; and you fondly believed that through your care and prayers they would have become the joy of your hearts. But may not Esau, when a child, have promised as much comfort to his parents as Jacob? Probably he had as many of their prayers and counsels. But as years advanced, he despised their admonitions, and filled their hearts with grief. As a promoter of family religion, who ever received such an encomium from the God

of heaven as Abraham? How tenderly did the good man pray for Ishmael! "O, that Ishmael might live before thee!" Yet how little comfort did Ishmael afford!

Alas! in these days of degeneracy, parents much more frequently witness the vices of their children than their virtues. And even should your children prove amiable and promising, you might live to be the wretched witnesses of their sufferings. Some parents have felt unutterable agonies of this kind.

5. *God may have taken the lamented object of your affection from the evil to come.* When extraordinary calamities are coming on the world, he frequently hides some of his feebler children in the grave. Isa. 57: 1, 2. Surely, at such a portentous period, it is happier for such as are prepared, to be lodged in that peaceful mansion, than to be exposed to calamities and distresses here. Thus intimates the prophet Jeremiah, 22: 10: "Weep not for the dead, neither bemoan him; but weep sore for him that goeth away; for he shall return no more, nor see his native country." It was in a day when the faith and patience of the saints were peculiarly tried, that the voice from heaven said, "Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth."

Are not troubles approaching now? Do not the clouds gather blackness? Your friends are privileged to die, while you are left to conflict with the storms of life. Now, if troubles come, your cares and fears will be fewer, and your own death more welcome. By one merciful dispensation, God provides for their safety, and your own easier passage to them. In removing your friends beforehand, he seems to say to you, as to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." The eye of Providence looks much farther than yours. Probably it would be more difficult for you to leave them behind, than to follow them.

6. *A parting time must come; and may not this be the best?* You knew beforehand that your child was mortal, and that the tie which bound you together must be severed. What did you receive at his birth, but a mortal being? And are you surprised to see a mortal being yield to death? "He who complains," says Seneca, "that one is dead, complains that he was a man." To be human, is to be mortal. Whatever inequalities attend our lives, the great statute law of heaven makes all equal at last. "It is appointed unto men once to die."

Perhaps you think that this is the least favorable time for parting; and that, had you enjoyed your friends longer, you might more easily have resigned them. But how are you deceived in this! The longer the period of enjoyment, the more strongly are the affections riveted, and the more painful is the separating stroke. Happy is it for us and for ours, that our times are in God's hands, not in our own. Those who are in Christ, and in the covenant, cannot die unseasonably. Though cropped in the blossom or the bud, they are still ripe for immortal glory.

As their death was most seasonable to them, so was it likewise to you. Had they lived longer, not only would your increased affection have rendered parting more difficult, but you might have seen such displays of corruption as would have filled you with perplexity and distress respecting their state. Surely, the Lord's time is best. In nothing do we more discover our folly, than in wishing to determine the season of our comforts and our troubles. Of the one, we are prone to think they can never come too soon; of the other, that they cannot come too late. But let us commit both the one and the other to Him whose works are all perfect, and all beautiful in their season.

7. *In this day of trouble, recollect your covenant with God, and the solemn engagements you made when you took him for your God.* Think of that period, when a heavier load of

grief pressed upon your heart than now ; when the burden of sin, the curse of the law, with the dread of death and hell, sunk you almost into despair. What was your language then ? Was it not this ? "Lord, give me Christ, and deny me whatever else thou pleasest. Pardon me, save me, and I will never repine. Do what thou wilt with me ; let me be friendless, childless, poor, any thing but Christless, graceless, and hopeless."

And when God heard your cry, and showed you mercy ; when he constrained you to submit to Christ, and to the terms of the covenant, was not this your language to your Saviour ? "Lord Jesus, here am I, a guilty, wretched sinner. Fear and trouble on the one hand ; on the other, a just God, a condemning law, and everlasting burnings. But, O blessed be God for the interposition of a Mediator! Thou art my only hope ; thy blood my only remedy. Thou hast said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Thou hast promised, 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' Thus encouraged, blessed Jesus, I come to thee. I come doubting, trembling, yet willing, and make a covenant with thee this day. I take thee, this day, as my Lord, and submit to all thy disposals. Do what thou wilt with me, or mine. Let me be rich or poor, any thing or nothing in this world, as thou pleasest. This day I likewise give myself to thee. All I am, all I have, shall be thine ; thine to serve thee, thine to be disposed of at thy pleasure. Thou henceforth art my sovereign Lord, my portion, my all."

Now then, Christian, fulfil your solemn engagements. Christ has disposed of your dear relative as he pleased ; and thus he tries your uprightness in covenanting with him. Where, then, is your promised contentment with his disposals ? Where your covenanted submission to his will ? Did you except the present affliction ? Did you say, "Lord, I consent that thou shalt take, when thou pleasest, any thing

I have, save only my husband, my wife, or this dear child? This I reserve. I can never part with this." If so, all you did was hypocrisy. If you were sincere, you had no reserves. You gave your Saviour *all*. And will you now conduct as though you repented, or at least had *forgotten* your engagements? Has Christ failed on his part? Can you charge him with the smallest instance of unfaithfulness? O, if you cannot, see that you too be faithful.

8. *In addition to your covenant with God, call to mind his covenant with you.* Is your family, which was lately in peace and prosperity, broken up and scattered? Have those dear objects to which you looked as the solace of your declining years, and your memorial in a future age, taken their flight? Do you, in cheerless solitude, and with many tears, peruse the words of Job: "O, that I were as in months past, as in the day when God preserved me! As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle, when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me?"

Still, in this desolate condition, be comforted with the covenant which God has made with you. David was afflicted, not only in the death of children, but still more in the wicked lives of children. Incest, murder, and rebellion in his family, combined to pierce his heart. Yet what sweet comfort does he derive from the covenant of grace! "Although," says he, "my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." The covenant made with him by God comforted him, although his house did not increase, and although those who remained were not such as he desired. So should all who are interested in the covenant be comforted in every family bereavement and affliction. For,

(1.) If you are God's covenant people, though he may

afflict, he will never forget you. "He is ever mindful of his covenant." You are as much on his heart in your deepest affliction as in your highest prosperity. You find it hard to forget your child, though turned to corruption. Day and night your thoughts dwell upon it untired. But surely it is easier for you to forget, I will not say a child departed, and mouldering in the dust, but the most endeared child you have *alive*, than for your God to forget you. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" Can such a monster be found? Possibly there may. "Yet," saith God to every believer, "I will not forget thee." His covenant is everlasting.

(2.) He will direct all your troubles to your good. It is a *well-ordered* covenant. It so disposes all your trials that they shall conspire to make you happy.

Possibly you cannot see how the present affliction should be for your good. You may be ready to say with Jacob, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not; and will ye take Benjamin away? All these things are against me." But believe it, your affliction is the result of covenant love and faithfulness. It shall certainly issue in your eternal benefit. You have therefore reason to be not merely resigned, but thankful.

(3.) This covenant is not only well-ordered in all things, but *sure*. You fondly dreamed that you were *sure* of the creature comfort which has forsaken you. Perhaps you said of your child now gone, as Lamech of his, "This same shall comfort us." But you see you built on the sand. And where were you now, had you not a firmer foundation for your hope and comfort? Be thankful that *covenant mercies* are more sure and lasting. Of your God, of your Saviour, and of heaven, none can deprive you. No created enjoyment can say to you, as God says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." The dearest husband must be parted

with. The most beloved wife must be resigned. From your children, who are as your own soul, you must be separated. Yet, blessed be God, there is something that abides! "All flesh is as grass, and its goodliness as the flower of the field. But the word of our God shall stand for ever." There is so much of support comprised in this single consideration, that could but your faith fix upon it, and realize it, and apply it, I might at once lay down my pen, and consider my work as accomplished.

9. *The excesses of our grief should be restrained by the hope of the resurrection.* Let those mourn without measure, who mourn without hope. The husbandman does not mourn when he casts his seed into the ground. He expects to receive it again, and more. The same hope have we respecting our friends who have died in faith. "I would not have you ignorant," says Paul, "concerning them who are asleep, that ye sorrow not as others who have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." He seems to say, "Look not on the dead as lost. They are not annihilated. Indeed, they are not *dead*. They only sleep; and they sleep to awake again." You do not lament over your children, or friends, while slumbering on their beds. Consider death as a longer sleep, from which they shall certainly awake.

Even a heathen philosopher could say that he enjoyed his friends, expecting to part with them; and parted with them, expecting to receive them again. And shall a heathen excel a Christian in bearing affliction with cheerfulness?

If you have a well-grounded hope that your deceased friend was interested in Christ, ponder, I entreat you, the precious supports afforded by the doctrine of the RESURRECTION.

(1.) The *same body* which was so pleasant to your eyes, shall be restored. "*My* eyes shall behold him," says Job,

"and *not another*." The same body which you commit to the grave shall be restored at the resurrection. Yes, mourning believer, you shall again meet the beloved form of the husband, the wife, the child, the friend, whom you now lament.

(2.) You shall *know* them to be the same objects which were once so dear. You will love them, indeed, not as now, but with a purer and more enlarged affection. Yet among the immense multitude you will be able to distinguish your parent, husband, wife, or child; and to say, This was the one for whom I wept and prayed; to whose spiritual good I was instrumental, or who was an instrument of salvation to me. The apostle Paul comforts himself with the thought, that the Thessalonians whom he had converted to Christ, would be his "joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming." This implies, that in the great day he would have a distinct knowledge of them. Indeed, reason and Scripture bid us believe that whatever knowledge tends to perfect our nature, or increase our felicity, will be found in the heavenly state.

(3.) We shall find our pious friends in heaven unspeakably more lovely and desirable than ever before. Here they had their infirmities, natural and moral. In heaven these will be for ever unknown. No natural infirmities will attend their glorified bodies; no sin, their perfected spirits. O, how lovely will their very bodies appear, when that which is *sown in dishonor* shall be *raised in glory!*

(4.) You will never part with them again. "The children of the resurrection can die no more." Never more will you kiss the pale lips of your Christian friends, nor fear another agonizing separation; but, together with them, you *will be with the Lord for ever*. What balm does this declaration of the apostle distil into the bleeding heart of friendship! Well might he add, "Comfort one another with these words."

10. *All who die in Christ have an immediate admission to heavenly glory.* Some have departed in the lively exercise of faith and hope, and left the most satisfying evidence of their interest in Christ. Even had they died in silence, the general and known tenor of their lives would have been ample testimony in their favor.

The work of Divine grace is begun in the hearts of some at a very early period of life. Many, when making a public profession of their faith in Christ, have referred to the religious instructions of the nursery as deeply affecting their minds, and, as they hoped, blessed by the Holy Spirit to their conversion. Even "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings" God can "perfect praise." Parents who have evidence that their children died in the Lord, have reason to rejoice in view of their departure.

Surely, there is no Christian who would not rejoice to see his child outstrip him in grace. Why should we not rejoice as much to have our children arrive first at glory? Shall we mourn that they are gone to heaven before us? Might they not say to us in such a case, as Christ to his dejected disciples, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I go to the Father." We profess much love to our children and friends; and if this love be pure and spiritual, can we grieve when they take leave of sin and sorrow, and go to a Father's house? Though we want their company, they want not ours. Christ has provided for them infinitely better than we could have done.

O, parents, think what an honor to you, that Christ should take your children from your bosom and put them in his own! That he should strip them of the garments of your own providing, and clothe them with white robes, washed in his own blood! That he should make you instruments to furnish heirs for the heavenly inheritance, and replenish the mansions of everlasting light! Your child may now be glorifying God in a higher style than you can;

and will you account that a loss to you which brings additional glory to God?

When Jacob heard that his favorite son was lord of Egypt, he rather wished himself with Joseph, than Joseph with him. And you, who are now tossing on a tumultuous sea, while your friend is in port, have more reason to wish yourself with him, than him with you.

11. *All dissatisfaction and repining under the rod is utterly fruitless and vain.* The bullock, by wrestling and resistance, does but gall his neck, and render the yoke more painful. Be not like a "bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." Excessive sorrow may break our sleep or our hearts, but it can profit us nothing. David's conduct at the death of his child was at once rational and pious. "Now he is dead," said he, "wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again?" While God's purpose is unknown to us, there is room for fasting and prayer. But when it is manifest in the event, it is the extreme of folly to vex our spirits, as David's servants expected he would do, when informed of the death of the child. But though with many tears he had deprecated the affliction, yet when it came, "Wherefore," said he, "should I fast?" He felt, what every mourner should feel, that he could no more alter the purpose and providence of God than he could change the seasons, or arrest the sun in its course. Let us not, then, waste our spirits and strength in a fruitless indulgence of grief.

12. *If you meekly submit to the rod, the Lord may restore your lost comforts.* You have no reason to exclaim with Esau, "Hast thou but one blessing, my father?" Your Father has many blessings to bestow. He is the *Father of mercies.* He can create as many mercies for you as he pleases. A few months or years since, the comforts, whose loss you now lament, were not in existence; nor did you know whence they should come to you. But God spoke the word, and they were yours. And surely, he who gave, is

able to replace them, and more. But as you would hope for such mercy, beware that you do not dishonor and displease him by impatience.

God removed all Job's children by a single stroke; and many circumstances combined to aggravate the affliction. Yet from the Divine hand he meekly received and patiently bore it. "Ye have heard," says an apostle, "of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord." "The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." The number of his *children*, indeed, was not doubled, as his other comforts were. Yet perhaps his *comfort* in this respect was doubled.* Nothing was ever lost by a quiet submission to the will of God.

It is as easy for God to revive, as to extinguish our enjoyments. "Thou wilt light my candle," says David; "the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." Every comfort we enjoy is a candle lighted by a kind Providence to cheer us in the path of life. These candles will not always last. Those which endure longest, will soon be wasted. Often, before they are half consumed, they are suddenly extinguished, and we are left in darkness. But let us remember, with David, that he who extinguishes our candle, can light it up again. The Lord can banish our troubles, and renew our comforts. Hannah waited on God for the blessing of children; and she was graciously remembered. We can lose no comfort but God can restore it, and double it, if he sees best.

13. *Though God should deny you such comforts as you have lost, he can bestow blessings incomparably greater.* "I will give them," says Jehovah, "a name better than of sons

* Some suppose that Job's receiving only the same number of children as formerly, while his other comforts were doubled in number, was designed to intimate to him that his first children were not extinct, but only removed to another world. In this view, *their* number was doubled too.

and of daughters. I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off." To be a child of God is a source of greater honor and comfort than ever a parent enjoyed in the best and most beloved of children.

Yes, dejected mourner, bereft, as you seem, of all joy, you have no reason for despondence. O, that you realized what blessings God has to bestow on those who submissively wait on him in their affliction! He has consolations far transcending the joy of children. So others have found. An eminently pious man, having lost an only son, retired for some hours to his closet, and then came forth with such a cheerful countenance, that all who saw him were filled with surprise. Being asked an explanation of this, he replied that he had enjoyed, in his retirement, that which, if renewed, might well reconcile him to part with a son every day. O, how great the disproportion between the light of God's countenance, and the best, the sweetest of created enjoyments!

Sometimes God mercifully prepares his people for peculiar trials, by granting them, previously, some remarkable manifestations of his love. The writer of this knew a most amiable woman, who, for several days before the death of her husband, was so favored with the presence of God, and the assurances of his love, that when the stroke came she was scarcely sensible of it; so entirely was she transported above every thing earthly. Yet her attachment was of the tenderest kind, as well as the object every way worthy; and she herself believed, that but for these extraordinary supports, she must have sunk under the burden of grief.

A husband, a wife, or child, is a dear object. But what is a husband, a wife, or child, compared with the all-sufficient and everlasting God? And how know you but he has withdrawn your earthly comforts to prepare the way for heavenly blessings? He may have removed your child,

that he may make room for the more abundant communication of *himself* and his love to your soul.

14. *By indulging excessive grief, you give advantage to the adversary.* All extremes are dangerous; and there is an extreme of dejection which invites the assaults of the tempter. That fallen spirit, equally cruel and cowardly, attacks the people of God when they are oppressed and sunk. He wished the Most High to smite Job in his estate, his children, and his person, because he hoped this would give him an advantage to poison his mind with blasphemous thoughts. "Do this, and he will curse thee to thy face."

Sometimes Satan excites in the afflicted soul *desponding* thoughts. "My hope," says the afflicted prophet, "is perished from the Lord." Sometimes he suggests *hard* thoughts of the divine conduct; and the sufferer is led to imagine his afflictions to be without a parallel. Sometimes he infuses *murmuring* thoughts, and sometimes those which are *atheistical*. "Verily," says the Psalmist, "I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence."

Thus Satan obtains advantage over the afflicted Christian. For though these things are his grief and burden, and therefore will not be imputed for his condemnation, yet they rob him of peace, and obstruct him in duty. They cause him to misimprove his affliction, and to harden others in sin. Beware, then, lest, by excessive sorrow, you give place to the devil.

15. *By inordinate grief you dishonor God and religion.* In the time of trouble many eyes are upon you. Atheists and scoffers, says one, when they see a suffering Christian, are apt scornfully to ask, Where is your God? What, then, will they say, should they hear you unbelievingly cry, Where is our God? Will they not exultingly exclaim, This is their boasted religion! what can it do for them in their extremity? Where now are the rich and

precious promises of which they have talked? If they have a treasure in heaven, why are they so dejected and unhappy?

O, Christians, the world have eyes as well as ears. If your deportment in trouble is like their own, they will think the same of your principles. Whatever you may talk of God and heaven, if your grief for the loss of worldly comforts is as great as theirs, they will believe your hearts are supremely devoted to the same objects as theirs. Thus, too, the precepts of your Saviour respecting contentment in all conditions, will be viewed as mere speculations, impossible to be reduced to practice. Indeed, the Gospel at large will be disesteemed, as little calculated to influence the mind or comfort the heart.

Endeavor, then, to convince the world that religion makes a real and essential difference between man and man; and that it consists, not in empty speculation, or a little outward strictness, but in humility, meekness, superiority to the world, and heavenly-mindedness. And let these graces display themselves in your submissive and cheerful deportment under trials. Why has God implanted these graces in your heart, but that he may have the honor, and you the benefit of them in the time of your trouble? Should these be suppressed, and nothing but pride, passion, and earthliness of mind be manifested amid your afflictions, O how will you wound religion, and dishonor the glorious name by which you are called! This thought must pierce a gracious heart deeper than any outward calamity.

16. *You know not how many mercies are embosomed in this affliction.* The children of God have often found their severest trials their richest blessings. This would be still more frequently the case, were they more careful to improve those trials. David could say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." May not affliction be as good for you as for David? It will, if, like his, it be sanctified. You needed

this rod. Perhaps you saw the need of some awakening Providence. If not, the Lord did. He did not smite you till faithfulness and love required it.

You incessantly deplore your loss. Every recollection of the dear departed object fills your heart with grief, and your eyes with tears. All this proves that the affliction was needful. For does it not emphatically declare that your attachment was extreme, and that the friend you have lost had a wrong place in your heart? And should God leave you thus? Should he permit this earthly object to engross your affections, and steal away your heart from himself? This he could not do, and love you. The greater your impatience under affliction, the greater your need of it. What if, by this stroke, God should awaken you from your pleasant, but perilous slumber—pillowed, as you were, upon this idolized creature. Were not this better, far better, than for him to say, "Let him sleep on. He is joined to idols: let him alone. He has left the fountain; let him continue at the broken cistern."

What if God should now so effectually discover to you the vanity of every created enjoyment, as that never more your heart and hopes shall fasten on them as before? Formerly you talked of the vanity of creatures. Now you *see* it, you *feel* it. Is not this mercy indeed! to be cured of your false and dangerous expectations from creatures; to have your judgment of them rectified, and your affections to them moderated; to have your wandering heart reclaimed to your God, your lost communion with him restored, your neglected duties revived? These are greater mercies than to have your friend again. Surely you will, in time, and to eternity, adore the hand which has removed the obstructions between you and your God. Now you can pray more constantly, more affectionately, more spiritually than before. Blessed rod, which buds and blossoms with such fruits as these!

17. *Your affliction, severe as it may seem, is light, compared with what others have known.* Your dear relative is dead. It is, however, but a single death; and probably in the ordinary way. Others have lost many friends at once; and by violent, perhaps cruel deaths. The unhappy Zedekiah had his children slain before his eyes; and then had those eyes (alas, too late!) put out. A family in Germany were once reduced to such extremity by famine, that the wretched parents were compelled to think of selling one of their children for bread to sustain themselves and the rest. But, attempting to designate the victim, they shrunk from the impossible task, and determined to meet death all together. Contemplate that picture of horror, Lam. 4 : 10, "The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children."

But it is needless to resort to scenes like these. Many parents, and some pious parents, have seen their children die awfully stupid, perhaps even profane; and sometimes by the hand of public justice. Most who read this, are unacquainted with such heart-rending afflictions. Instead, therefore, of complaining, they have reason to be thankful, and to adore the sovereignty which has so mercifully distinguished them.

18. *If God be your God, you can sustain no real loss by the removal of a creature.* God is the fountain of all true comfort. Creatures are but streams which convey the consolations he is pleased to impart. If some of these streams be cut off, he can bless us through another medium. And he can bless us without a medium. In this case we lose nothing. No comforts are so sweet as those which flow directly from the fountain. Is the fulness of the fountain yours, and will you despond because the broken *cistern* is removed? The best of creatures are no better. Cisterns have nothing but what they receive; and broken cisterns cannot hold what they receive. Why, then, do you mourn,

as if all happiness were gone? You still have free access to the fountain. If God never restore the comfort you have lost, he can more than compensate it in himself. And is not one glimpse of his countenance, one manifestation of his special love, a sweeter and more substantial comfort than all the world can afford? Repair, then, to the fountain. Though creatures fail, God is unchangeable and all-sufficient still.

19. *Afflictions often tend to render death more easy.* Many pious persons have been embarrassed on a dying bed by their affection and anxiety for those they must leave behind. Had not God removed your relatives beforehand, your love to them might have caused you very unduly to cling to life. For these are the things that make men loath to die. It is much easier to think of going to our friends in heaven, than of leaving them behind us on earth. The thought of leaving those we most tenderly love, in a deceitful, dangerous world, perhaps to want and distress, is painful, and almost distracting.

True, it is our duty to commit our fatherless children and friendless relatives to God. And some have been enabled cheerfully to do this on a dying bed. Luther could say, "Lord, thou hast given me a wife and children. I have little to leave them. Father of the fatherless, and Judge of the widow, do thou nourish, teach, and keep them." But every Christian has not Luther's faith. Those, then, whose dearest friends have gone before them, are in some respects privileged. As their ties to earth are weakened, they may hope to find it less difficult to die.

20. *You are rapidly approaching that state where all these sorrows will be unknown.* We now live partly by faith, and partly by sense; partly on God, and partly on the creature. Soon God will be all in all; and we shall be as the angels, who neither marry nor are given in marriage. Our sins and our sufferings will cease together. Our glorified

relations will live with us for ever. They will complain no more. They will die no more. With them we shall surround the throne of God, and drink at the fountain of immortal felicity. All sorrow will be swallowed up in endless joy. And, O Christian, this blessedness is near. Let the thought console your afflictions, and becalm your perturbed minds.

III. I am now to *consider and refute the* PLEAS of immoderate grief. It is natural for men, and even for Christians, to justify, at least to palliate, such excessive sorrow. But it is important to all to see that it admits no apology. This point I shall illustrate, chiefly in reference to bereaved parents, because this is the case presented in the text. But the thoughts I shall suggest will generally apply to bereavements at large.

Plea 1. "My child was a child of many prayers; a Samuel asked of the Lord; and, as I hoped, given in *answer* to prayer. But now I fear it was *not* bestowed in special mercy. My child is dead, and my prayers seem shut out."

Answer. Unless you prayed for children *submissively*, you were wrong. You ought not to limit the Holy One, nor prescribe, nor make terms with him. If you did, you are now justly rebuked. But if you prayed conditionally and submissively, referring both the bestowment and continuance of the mercy supplicated to the divine wisdom and will, then there is nothing in the death of the child contrary to the spirit and intent of your prayer.

Farther: your prayers may be answered, though the blessing asked be withheld or speedily withdrawn. There are four ways in which God answers prayer. He may immediately bestow the blessing supplicated. Dan. 9: 23. He may impart it after considerable delay. Luke, 18: 7. He may withhold the mercy asked, and bestow a greater. Deut. 3: 25; compare Deut. 34: 4, 5. Or he may give patience to support the loss or want of it. 2 Cor. 12: 9.

If God has taken away your child, or friend, and given you a meek, quiet, submissive spirit, you need not suspect that he has *shut out your prayer.*

Plea 2. "Mine is no common loss. My child was singularly beautiful, lovely, and desirable."

Answer. Beauty in children or relations, though a good gift, is a common, not a special mercy. It is short-lived and vanishing, and often has proved a snare. The souls of some had been more beautiful, had their persons been less so. And what has all mortal beauty to compare with the beauty of the saints, in that day when they shall shine forth as the sun in their Father's kingdom? If your child or friend sleeps in Jesus, he will appear ten thousand times more lovely in the morning of the resurrection than ever before.

Besides, the more lovely and engaging the object removed, the more signal and amiable will be your submission, if you cheerfully resign it. Had it been a thousand times more sweet and engaging, it would not have been too good to give to your God. Now, then, let it be seen that your obedience to his will can conquer the strongest of natural affections; and that you consider patience and resignation as more desirable than the sweetest of earthly enjoyments. If, like Abraham, you can give up a child, inexpressibly beloved, to God, incomparably *more* beloved, you will have a comfortable evidence of your sincerity.

Plea 3. "Had I enjoyed my child longer, I could more easily have resigned it; but death nipped it in the bud, and my expectations were raised only to be disappointed."

Answer. If it died in Christ, its life was sufficiently protracted. The conflict is long enough, if the victory be secured. The shorter the life of your child, the less sin was committed and the less sorrow endured. Sin and sorrow fill the world. A quick passage through such a world is a special privilege. That parting would have been easier

after a longer enjoyment, is a mistake. The reverse is true. A tender plant may be easily plucked up; but let it spread and fasten its roots for years, and how hard to remove it! Such are our affections to children and friends. Above all, this thought should tranquillize your mind; your child was removed in God's time, and that time is always fittest and best.

Plea 4. "In losing one, I have lost all. Had I other children, this privation had been less afflictive; but now it is insupportable."

Answer. Religion does not permit us to say of our deceased friends, that they are *lost.* They are only *gone before.* Nor can a Christian say he has lost all in one, except that one be Christ; and him he can never lose. Doubtless you mean, that you are deprived of all your comfort *of this kind.* And what if you are? Do there not still remain to you multitudes of comforts, more precious, more excellent, more durable? Is your portion in this life? Have you not a God who can more than supply the loss of the most beloved of creatures?

Plea 5. "I am not only stripped, but have no hope of seeing another child. My comfort in children is gone for ever."

Answer. Bless God that you have better mercies and higher hopes than children. Peruse the promise, Isa. 56: 4, 5. And farther, if God denies you comfort from children, resolve to draw your comfort more entirely from himself. You will be no loser by the exchange. In one hour's communion with God you will find an enjoyment which the happiest of parents never found in children.

Plea 6. "My bereavement was sudden and unexpected. My beloved relative was taken without the least warning."

Answer. You could not be ignorant that your relatives were frail, dying creatures. And it was your duty to live in habitual expectation of the parting stroke. You likewise

saw other parents, husbands, and wives conveying their dead to their long home; and what were these but warnings to you?

Farther: what you consider the sting of your affliction, others would have regarded as a favor. They have witnessed with agony the gradual and most distressing approaches of death to their sick friends. Some of the tenderest of parents and friends have even been compelled to implore, upon their knees, that the parting moment might be hastened, and an end put to pains and sufferings more terrible than death.

Plea 7. "I neglected the proper means and precautions for preserving life. I have reason to apprehend that, but for this negligence and inconsideration, my relative might have been living; and this is inexpressibly grievous."

Answer. It is wrong to neglect means; and it is wrong to ascribe too much to them. The best of them are utterly fruitless without God's blessing. When his appointed time was come, this blessing was withheld; and that it had come in the present case, is manifest from the event. This consideration should quiet your mind, now the event is known; though, while it was uncertain, it should not have prevented any exertions.

But do you not charge yourself unjustly? It may be, you doubted what course to pursue. Having observed many to die under the hands of physicians, and many to recover without them, or not thinking the present case hazardous, you omitted to call them. Or, among various courses prescribed, you preferred that which you now think the least proper. Yet you followed the best light you had. In either case you have no reason for severe reflections on yourself. Because the event is unfavorable, to be vexed that you pursued the dictates of your judgment, is to be vexed that you are not omniscient; for none but the omniscient can foresee future events.

Again: seasons of affliction are apt to be seasons of

temptation. The adversary then frequently charges us with sins of which we are not guilty; and frequently magnifies our mistakes into sins. Indeed, had yours been a voluntary neglect; had you preferred hazarding the life of your friend to parting with a little money, you would have much reason to reproach yourself; for great would have been your guilt. But probably this was not the case; and if so, your vexation is unreasonable and wrong.

Plea 8. "Were I assured that the deceased friend or child is with Christ, I should be quiet. But alas! I fear the contrary, and the very thought is overwhelming."

Answer. Admit that you have real ground of fear. It is a distressing case indeed; and to a pious heart, almost overwhelming. Still, you can have no reason to murmur against the dispensations of God. Consider his adorable sovereignty over the souls which he has made. "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" What if the Lord does not see fit to bestow his special mercies on those most dear to us? Is there any wrong done to them or to us? Aaron had the unutterable distress to see his two sons cut off by God's immediate hand, and in the very act of sin. Yet *Aaron held his peace.* God plainly signified to Abraham that the covenant should not be established with Ishmael, for whom he so earnestly prayed. And though he probably concluded that there was no salvation out of the covenant, yet he piously acquiesced.

Consider, farther, God's distinguishing love and mercy to you. What thanks do you owe, that root and branch have not been cast together into the fire! What thanks that the Lord has given you good hope, through grace, that it shall be well with you to eternity! Let the thought fill you with grateful astonishment, and awe you into a holy, trembling submission to the inscrutable decree of heaven.

But farther, examine the ground of your fear. There may be less reason for it than you apprehend. Perhaps

your child died in infancy. As to infants at large, we may safely leave them in the hands of a Being infinite in justice, infinite in mercy.

Perhaps your child had passed infancy; but did not exhibit, in life or death, that decisive evidence of grace which you wished. Yet if his mind was tender, and his deportment exemplary; if he escaped the pollutions of the world, and made conscience of sin and duty, you have reason to be thankful. There may have been found in him, as in young Abijah, "some good thing toward the Lord." A natural modesty and reserve may have led him to conceal from you some things, which, had they been known, would have convinced you of his piety. If there was the faintest spark of grace in his bosom, it was not overlooked by him who "despiseth not the day of small things."

But however this may be, he is now beyond your reach. He is gone to an omniscient, righteous, and merciful Judge.

Your duty lies, not in indulging *curious or anxious* inquiries respecting his state, but in improving the bereavement to the glory of God and your own spiritual good.

Plea 9. "I fear this visitation is a special punishment for my sin in idolizing the object withdrawn, at least in not loving it so spiritually as I ought."

Answer. If your love was not spiritual and pure—a sin too common, even among Christians—you have reason for humiliation, but not for despondence. Perhaps your conscience, now particularly tender, paints your guilt in its strongest colors. But admit what you apprehend, that God has afflicted you for your sin, and removed the comfort because it was idolized; you have no reason to sink under the affliction. This may be in love to your soul. "As many as I love," says he, "I rebuke and chasten." How much better that God should remove your idolized enjoyment, than that he should say of you, as of Ephraim, "He is joined to

idols: let him alone." How much better to be chastened, than to be cast off for ever!

Plea 10. "I hoped to have left to my beloved children the fruits of my cares and toils. But I am disappointed; and all my worldly possessions can afford me no comfort."

Answer. Many of your acquaintances are destitute, both of children and wealth. If, though deprived of one, you are indulged with the other, you have reason for gratitude rather than discontent. Consider, too, though *you* have no children, *God* has many children in the world, whom your wealth may comfort and refresh. And doubtless your charity to them will turn to greater account than leaving a great estate to your posterity. Surely, we were not sent into this world to amass great estates for our children. If you have too eagerly pursued this object, your folly is justly rebuked. Bless God that you have yet an opportunity to *honor him* eminently *with your substance.* And since other executors are denied, let your own hands distribute to the necessities of the saints, and for the spread of the Gospel. So shall the blessing of those who are ready to perish come upon you.

Plea 11. "The pleasant words and actions of my departed child are constantly recurring to memory, and wounding my heart anew."

Answer. That you were blest with so desirable a child, claims your gratitude. How many parents have been afflicted with children destitute of reason and common sense! How many children, through a perverse temper, have been the vexation and torment of those who gave them birth! Besides, the circumstances mentioned, though engaging, are in themselves of small importance; yet to you they will prove serious evils, if instrumental of depressing or imbittering your spirit. At this serious moment greater things claim your attention. You ought to be engaged in inquiring for the design of your afflictions, in mortifying the

sins which have procured them, and in subjecting your heart to the divine will.

Plea 12. "I am not only afflicted, but deserted. In the time of my trouble, the Lord has hidden his face from me."

Answer. You may want sensible comfort, and still have his gracious supports. The light of God's countenance may be withdrawn, yet the everlasting arms may be underneath you. Nor is it an unusual thing for God to hide his face at such a time. This has not only been the experience of his dearest saints, but it was true of his beloved SON, who, at a period when most of all he wanted his Father's presence, was constrained to exclaim, in agony of soul, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Inquire likewise, may not your want of submission provoke God to hide his face? This is but too probable. The comforting Spirit cannot rest in that bosom which is the seat of unsubdued and tumultuous passions. Would you enjoy his cheering smiles? Meekly receive and drink the cup which your heavenly Father has mingled. Accept the punishment of your iniquity. Say from the heart, and with unaffected submission, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

IV. I am now, in the last place, to POINT OUT THE REMEDY of immoderate sorrow. Much, indeed, has been said already to dissuade from this evil. Yet it may be of additional advantage to suggest the following rules.

Rule 1. *If you would not excessively lament the loss of created comforts, guard against loving them inordinately while in your possession.* The apostle unites *temperance* and *patience* in the precept, 2 Pet. 1 : 6. The affection of Jacob for Joseph was doubtless excessive. The consequence was, that when the favorite was supposed to be dead, the fond father refused to be comforted, and resolved to "go down to the grave to his son mourning." Behold, Christians, the

consequence of inordinate affection; and as you would avoid the sad effect, beware of the *cause*.

Rule 2. *Faithfully perform your duties to your relatives while you have them.* The consciousness of this will do much to allay your sorrows when they are yours no longer. But conscious guilt adds a sting to affliction. How terrible to look on a deceased friend, to whom, while living, we have been unfaithful, perhaps unkind! As you would part comfortably with friends at death, and meet them comfortably at judgment, be faithful in the discharge of all relative duties.

Rule 3. *Pour out your sorrows into the bosom of God.* What a privilege is prayer to the Christian at all times, but especially in seasons of distress! It is a relief to deposit our sorrows in the bosom of a wife or a friend. How much more to leave our complaints with a compassionate and faithful God! Go then, Christian, in the cloudy and dark day; retire from all creatures, and pour out your heart to your heavenly Father. Confess your sins; justify God in his severest chastisements; entreat the support of his everlasting arms; implore his smiles to cheer your drooping spirit. Thus you may hope to find the best relief, the sweetest consolation.

Rule 4. *In your affliction eye God more, and secondary causes less.* "I was dumb," says David, "I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." In your affliction, and in all its circumstances, consider the hand of God. 1. As a *sovereign* hand. He has a perfect right to dispose of you, and of all your comforts; and this without explaining the reasons of his conduct. Job 33: 13. 2. As a *Father's* hand, correcting in love and faithfulness. Prov. 3: 12. If the affliction draws your heart to God, and divorces it from the world, surely it is a kind affliction. If it issues in your love to God, doubt not it proceeds from God's love to you. 3. As a *righteous* hand. Surely, God has done you no wrong. Must you not confess that all you suffer is the fruit of sin?

4. As a *tender, merciful* hand, inflicting less than your iniquities deserve. He has cast you into the furnace of affliction; and might he not justly have cast you into the pit of despair? "It is of the Lord's mercies that you are not consumed. Why should a living man complain?"

Rule 5. *Compare your afflictions with those of others.* Say not, there is no sorrow like your sorrow. You have lost one child; but Aaron lost two, and Job all; and lost them by an immediate, instantaneous stroke of God. The children of some pious parents have died victims to public justice. Others have lived to sin so grievously, that their broken-hearted parents were ready to wish they had died from the womb. A third class have experienced such protracted and intolerable sufferings on a sick bed, that even a fond mother has wished and prayed for the closing moment. O think of these things, and acknowledge that your lot has been comparatively merciful.

Rule 6. *Avoid whatever tends to renew your grief and excite your impatience.* Do not increase your sorrow by the sight of melancholy objects, or by conversing about them. Thus you will avoid some of the principal means by which the adversary excites the corruptions of the heart. Where there is so much of the *inflammable*, you cannot too solicitously shun the approach of every spark.

Rule 7. *Remember that you will soon, very soon, follow the friend you have lost.* "I shall go to him," says David, in reference to his deceased child. When we forget our mortality, the loss of our earthly comforts seems insupportable. When we feel that "time is short," we learn to "weep as though we wept not." When we look into our own graves, we can look with composure into the graves of our friends.

And now, may the Father of mercies, the God who comforteth the mourner, write these truths in your heart, to your present consolation and your everlasting joy. Amen.

No. 60.

GROWTH IN GRACE.

BY REV. THOMAS GOODWIN, D. D.

PREFATORY REMARKS.

1. THERE are, among Christians, two sorts of converts: those who, at the time of conversion, are sensible of the change wrought in their minds; and those to whom the change is not, at the time, perceptible.

As to the first, the suddenness of the change produces great effects in them. The powers of their minds are greatly excited. Their feelings are unusually strong. They have great sorrow and deep humiliation for sin. Their souls are watered with copious dews and showers from heaven; till all the streams swell to a flood. But, by and by, the waters abate, and flow in an ordinary channel; and then, those who had supposed their joys were always to last, ignorant of the cause of their interruption, begin to indulge in sorrow, give way to distressing doubts, and in the end, perhaps, are ready to conclude that they are not subjects of grace.

Those who have never been sensible of any sudden change in their views, are exercised with doubts of another kind. Conversion was to them as the morning light, not perceptible at first, but "shining more and more unto the perfect day." They are therefore distressed that they cannot tell *when* the streams began to flow.

Thus hath God in his wisdom ordered it, that neither the one class nor the other should rest in any works wrought in them; but all fly to Christ alone.

2. Those who grow in grace, do not appear to them-

selves to be growing more holy ; on the contrary, they are more and more sensible that they are great sinners. True, they loathe sin more than ever, and are less than ever under its dominion ; yet, having more perfect views of God's character and law, they daily become better convinced of their own exceeding depravity and vileness.

3. Earnest desires after greater degrees of grace are excited in Christians by a discovery of their deficiencies. When they see so many wants, they are often ready to think they do not grow in grace. "There is," saith Solomon, "that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches." Because he enlarges his desires, therefore he thinks himself poor. But to determine our *improvement*, we are not to compare our writing with our *copy ;* but our writing *now*, with what it was at *first*.

4. It is not to be expected, that growth in grace will be as discernible as the change wrought at first conversion. Then, the change is from entire sinfulness to a beginning of holiness. Afterwards, in growth of grace, the change is only from one degree of holiness to another ; the addition of something more of the same kind.

5. To discern growth in grace, time must be allowed. Christians do not grow perceptibly, till after some space. Nor are those things which grow the fastest, always the most excellent. Rushes and willows grow fast, but they are weak plants: oaks grow slowly, but they are solid, and attain to great size.

6. In the *degree* and *manner* of growth, Christians are not alike. To some God gives more grace at first, when he has immediate use for them ; as to Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. To some he gives five talents : to others, two. And some who are soon to die, God fits early for heaven.

Again, there are some who grow almost without intermission, while others are continually meeting with obstacles in their way ; and perhaps, for a time, cease to grow. Such are to determine their growth, not by a part of their lives, but by comparing their whole lives together.

MISTAKES REMOVED.

It will be my object here, to point out *several things, which are often made measures of growth in grace, but which in reality are evidences nowise to be depended upon.*

1. Growth in grace is not to be measured by *growth in gifts.*

Hypocrites may grow in gifts. Believers too may grow in gifts, as in praying, preaching, and exhortation, while they gain nothing in grace. Gifts are desirable, and the apostle bids us "covet earnestly the best gifts." But he adds, "yet I show unto you a more excellent way." This more excellent way, he tells us, is *charity:* that is, true grace, holy love, love exercised towards God and our neighbor. And what stronger language could he have used, than when he further adds, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." Gifts may enable us to edify others; nothing short of grace can save our own souls.

We ought, indeed, to endeavor to grow in gifts, that we may be more serviceable to those around us; and for this reason it is, that we are commanded to *covet the best* gifts. But there is a wide difference between cultivating gifts, and making them the measure of grace. The one is directly enjoined upon us in Scripture; the other is forbidden, and is manifestly full of danger.

It should never be forgotten by us, that the greater gifts we possess, the greater obligations we are under to become eminently useful. If our gifts come from Christ, and we use them for him, they will aid our growth in grace; if not, they will only prove a hindrance, and serve to enhance our final condemnation.

Here it should be remarked, that by increasing in grace, men often, yea, commonly, increase in gifts; and that, for

the want of increasing in grace, gifts often fail. The talents which were faithfully used, were doubled ; that which was misimproved, was taken away.

Christians are often led to question their growth in grace, because they cannot pray or converse so fluently as some others. Such should remember, that the very want of gifts, if it cause us to walk humbly, and to pray fervently, though not eloquently, will be a means of growth in grace. The deeper our humility, the less the pride occasioned by our gifts, the more fruit shall we bring forth to God.

Even when gifts fail, growth in grace need not be hindered. Our memories and all the faculties of our minds may be impaired ; our bodies may cease to be active ; all our means for doing good may become less ; and yet we may grow more than ever in grace. True grace is the only thing that does not necessarily decay. " Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ; whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away ; but love never faileth."

2. Growth in grace cannot be measured by *the success which attends gifts.* That is, we cannot determine our growth in grace by the effects which our example, conversation, prayers, or preaching may have upon others. We are assured that " every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor ;" but nowhere is it written, that men shall be rewarded according to the *success* of their labors. The aged minister may be compelled to relax his labors, perhaps entirely cease from them ; so that he can no longer perceive that success which crowned the exertions of his younger years. But this need not prevent his own growth in grace. The same will hold true of the labors of Christians in every situation.

The Holy Ghost, at times, makes one of less grace instrumental of more good than others of more grace ; though it is most true, that usually God delights to honor with the greatest success such as are the most active and

zealous in their labors; such as in their religion are the most humble, pious, and sincere.

Christians, in their endeavors to do good, may often fail. But their reward shall not fail. They shall be rewarded, because it was *in their hearts* to do good. "Thou didst well," said God to David, "that thou hadst it in thine heart to build me a house."

3. Growth in grace is not to be measured by *our opportunities or means of doing good.*

One who has less grace than another, may be in a situation to do more good, and may possess far more abundant means. God regards not the advantages we have, but the manner in which we improve them. He seeth not as man seeth. He looketh on the heart. He considereth the desires which we have, and the exertions which we make, to render him service. "Verily, I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than all they who have cast into the treasury."

The Christian, though he has it not in his power to do great good himself, will ever rejoice when he hears that others are doing good. Paul, in prison, rejoiced to hear that Christ was preached by others, and his rejoicing he knew would turn to his salvation.

If we prize opportunities for doing good; if, for the sake of benefiting others, and advancing the cause of the Redeemer, we sacrifice our own property, ease, or credit; then do we truly grow in grace.

4. Growth in grace is not to be measured by *hopes, joys, or raptures.*

Hopes and joys are the comfort of a Christian; faith, humility, and love, are the substantial graces.

Joys may diminish, while faith and humility increase. The blossoms fall from the tree before the fruit comes on. To be at times involved in darkness, or forsaken of the Spirit, may serve, in the end, to strengthen the substantial graces. A state of darkness tries our faith, produces humility, and give us a deep sense of our dependence.

Young Christians are, not unfrequently, subjects of great joy. For a time, they seem to advance rapidly. But, as yet, they have been moving only with the stream. Let them attempt to stem the tide, and immediately they find difficulty. Skill and strength can be gained only by striving occasionally against the stream.

5. Growth in grace is not to be measured by *outward profession*. To have the most excellent truths of Christianity often on our tongues, is not to feel the power of those truths upon our hearts. It is possible to manifest great forwardness in religion, without having ever been acquainted with its transforming influence. We ought not to cause men to think of us above what we are. Higher professions than the truth will warrant are hypocrisy, and are sure to injure the cause we would promote.

If we would gain truly Christian characters; if we would make a truly Christian profession; religion must have its seat in our hearts. Let holiness possess the affections, and it will not fail to discover itself in our conduct.

6. Growth in grace is not to be measured by *the strength of our feelings*. We speak in general of those feelings which are connected with religion. The fact, that the feelings produced in our minds by the things of religion, are not so strong now as they once were, is not sufficient to prove that we are not growing in grace. There may still be *more of holiness* in the affections which we now exercise. Spiritual and natural affections, in a greater or less degree, exist together in the hearts of the children of God. Growth in grace, then, will be in proportion to the predominancy of holy affections over the natural.

The faith of the Christian, while his joys continue great, and his passions wear the appearance of friends, will seem far stronger than it is; much presumption will mingle with faith. But when the Christian finds that his life is to be a warfare, that he has within powerful enemies to encounter, then he feels himself weak, and learns that his strength is

only "in the Lord. His strength is made perfect in weakness. When I am weak, then am I strong."

7. Growth in grace is not to be measured by *growth in any one virtue singly*.

In the different parts of the "perfect man in Christ Jesus," there will be a beautiful proportion. There will be no distortion of the body, by an overgrowth of particular members while others are at a stand. All the members will grow equally and uniformly, and thus beauty and symmetry be preserved through the whole.

As the Christian advances in years, he may find it necessary to devote less time to some duties than he was wont to do when young. Perhaps he then employed the greatest part of his time in fasting, prayer, or meditation. If he now spends less time in these duties, he is not hastily to conclude that he does not grow in grace. There are many duties to be performed besides fasting and prayer: some of which, it may be, he formerly neglected. Is he now careful to perform every known duty? Does he guard against neglecting the more *arduous* duties of religion for those which are *more pleasant?* Has *every* precept of the Bible weight with him? Does he assign to each duty its proper place, and its proper portion of his time? Then, though he abounds less in some things, he grows more than ever in grace.

It is often necessary for such as have just begun a life of religion, to spend much of their time in those duties which bring them near to God. It is necessary, because their condition requires it. They are seeking to be established in grace. Religion has just become, with them, "the one thing needful;" therefore, for a time they are allowed to neglect other things for it. After Paul, on his way, was "met of the Lord," he spent three whole days in fasting and prayer.

In seasons of religious anxiety, children and servants are to be treated with peculiar tenderness. They should have more time than usual allotted to them, from their ordinary

employments, to attend to the concerns of their souls. The same mild treatment is to be extended to such as, having once been established in grace, are again involved in darkness. This, with the soul, is a time of sickness; and who does not allow to his servants, in sickness, opportunity to apply the means of cure?

DIRECT PROOFS OF GROWTH IN GRACE.

1. We grow in grace when we *are led to the exercise of new graces.*

The Christian is continually adding grace to grace. At every step of his progress in Christian knowledge, he arrives at the perception of new truths; and these truths are accompanied with correspondent affections. Christians have, first, *the law* for their *schoolmaster*. From this they learn the holy character of God, their own sinfulness, and the just sentence they are under of eternal punishment. They are next made acquainted with the method of pardon and free grace: salvation by Jesus Christ. Then, through the Spirit they discover their union to Christ, and learn to do all things for him, and in his strength.

God deals with Christians as with his church. In the infant days of the church, he revealed only such things as were necessary for salvation, reserving more particular and glorious revelations for after ages; so now, God, at first, only implants in Christians a holy principle, and reveals that which is necessary to salvation; but afterwards, he gives greater degrees of his Spirit, and calls every grace into exercise. As God constantly repeated his instructions to the church, from time to time, teaching them all things anew; so he now instructs Christians again and again, going over all things from the beginning. The Christian, through his whole life, is ever learning something new. He often has views of things more distinct than he ever entertained before. Sometimes he dwells upon his own wretchedness, misery, and entire want of all things; and humbles him-

self by looking at the holiness and strictness of God's law. Again, he considers the excellency and righteousness of Christ, the fulness there is in him to supply all his wants; and is filled with hope and joy, while he trusts in his Redeemer.

Christians, when they have new affections, are often ready to distrust what they have before experienced, and to suppose that their present feelings only are evidences of grace, while, in fact, they are to be considered as evidences of growth in grace. When the mind becomes more enlightened; when apprehensions of spiritual things become more distinct, and affections more enlarged; then have we reason to conclude that we grow in grace. As the wicked, proceeding from sin to sin, reach the greatest wickedness; so Christians arrive at eminent holiness, by adding grace to grace. "Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. We grow in grace when we *exercise new degrees of the same grace*. This is to extend to every grace. Not only is love to become more fervent, but humility more profound, and faith stronger. We are to rely more and more upon Christ, and to find increasing sweetness in him. In all things, that which is lacking is to be made up. If we truly grow in grace, we shall not only hate sin, as contrary to God's holiness, but shall also mourn for it, as committed against our best Friend, against him "who loved us and laid down his life for us." Hatred of sin will daily increase; and our motives in hating it become more pure. In a word, if we go on to exercise greater degrees of grace, we shall have an increasing spirit of prayer; we shall "abound in the work of the Lord; our last works will be more than our first; and we shall be filled with the fruits of righteousness."

3. We grow in grace when we *become more spiritual in the performance of religious duties.* It is the *spirit* with which religious duties are performed, rather than their *number*, by which we are to judge of growth in grace. The prayers of him who truly grows in grace, become more spiritual.

Christians, in sickness, or in the decline of life, may be obliged, in part, to remit holy duties; and yet they may then, no less than at other times, be in the exercise of grace. The duties they do perform, may be performed in a far more spiritual manner. One short prayer put up in faith, and with brokenness of heart, may avail more with God, than many long prayers, or than whole days spent in fasting and prayer.

If young Christians often perform more duties than older Christians, they also spoil more duties. It is not the size, nor the juiciness of fruit, which commends it most; it is its *flavor.* When our prayers become more spiritual, our confessions will expose more of the deformity of our hearts; our petitions will be made with stronger faith; we shall have more earnest desires for pardon and holiness; the heart will flow out more readily in gratitude; we shall more sensibly feel the wants of others; we shall pray with increased zeal for the churches, and for all those that are ignorant of a Saviour.

The spirituality of religious duties will depend upon the object we have in them. If our aim is the glory of God; if we sanctify him in our hearts; if we obey out of love and thankfulness; then we are spiritual in our duties.

The greatest growth in grace is in the spirituality of religion; in worshipping Him who is a Spirit "in spirit and in truth."

4. We grow in grace when we *grow in our dependence upon Christ.* "In all things we are to grow up in him who is the Head, even Christ. The life we lead is not in ourselves, but in Christ. Without him, we can do nothing." Being emptied of our own righteousness, we are to "receive

of his fulness." In Scripture, growth in grace is connected with growing *in the knowledge of Christ:* "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." To grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, are inseparably connected. The heathen philosophers could grow in moral virtues, but not in grace; for they knew nothing of Christ. And, at the present day, there are many, externally amiable and pleasing in their lives, who do many of those things which it is well should be done, who are yet destitute of grace, because they know nothing of Christ. In all they do there is no regard to a Redeemer. They are ignorant of those things which are the first principles of grace; the pure motives of the Christian have never entered their hearts.

A young Christian may possibly perform more works than one who is older; but not more *works of grace.* If we think, by our works, by the performance of any duty, to recommend ourselves to God, then we are resting in works, and not depending upon Christ; we are trusting to "the deeds of the law," and do not acknowledge Christ *to be all in all.*

5. We grow in grace when we *learn to do all things in season.*

The righteous man is said to "bring forth his fruit in his season." And words "in season, fitly spoken," are compared to "apples of gold in pictures of silver." We are not simply to reprove, but to reprove in season; not simply to act, but to act in season. All things are to be done in their proper time. We are to observe proper seasons in the performance of our religious duties.

6. We grow in grace when we *learn to do all things with wisdom.* Often a little, done *wisely,* has been known to effect more than many great labors. The smallest exertions, made with care and discretion, may accomplish much. When Moses could not hear all the causes of the children of Israel, he laid himself out to greater advantage, by appointing judges from the people, for the smaller matters, and reserving for himself only the hard cases.

Those men are not always the most liberal, who give the most. The Christian is careful, not only to give, but to do good with what he gives. He seeks out such sufferers as will be most benefited by his charity; and promotes, by his property and influence, such objects as promise the most extensive usefulness.

7. We grow in grace when we *become more even and constant in a holy course*. The inward man is renewed most, day by day, when the spiritual affections become settled; so that the Christian can walk closely with God for a long time together. To be at times careful in the performance of duties, and again to be remiss; to be one day full of ardor, and the next, cold and indifferent, is no good sign of growth in grace. It is the steady, even flame, not the sudden flash, which benefits us most by its light.

8. We grow in grace when we *persevere in the midst of difficulties and dangers*. The true Christian will persevere. With whatever difficulties and discouragements he may meet, he will not draw back. But when Christians effect little with great labor, and in the midst of difficulty, their little shall be accounted to them for much. When they patiently endure reproach, subject themselves for the cause of the Redeemer to insult and danger, and, in the midst of a perverse world, continue to lead a holy and blameless life, they are making advances towards the heavenly Canaan. Their *works*, their *patience* and *labor*, shall not be forgotten. Soon they shall finish their journey, and enter on their rest.

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ON

PURIFYING THE HEART.

BY REV. THOMAS GOODWIN, D. D.

The purifying of the heart from its corruptions is one of the strongest *evidences of growth in grace*, and demands our most serious attention. We are not now to consider it, however, as it is a duty of the Christian, though it is one of very evident importance; but principally as it is a work of God, which he performs upon the hearts of such as are truly his. "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." He purifies the hearts of his children, because Christ has purchased for them a death unto sin, and a resurrection to newness of life. He cannot delight in them while they are yet in their sins, nor can their services be acceptable to him. He would have those who worship him, offer "incense and a pure offering;" he would have all who pray to him, "lift up holy hands."

We shall first point out some of the means by which God purifies his children from sin, and then consider the evidences a Christian may have that God is, or is not purifying his heart.

I. As to the means *by which God purifies the hearts of his children*, it may be observed, in general, that there are no means but what God makes use of for this purpose,

whether occasional or instituted. He causes "all things to work together for good to them that love him." Some of the ways in which God commonly purifies the heart will now be pointed out.

1. *By affliction.*

"Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Mercies will not prevail against all sins: some require afflictions. If God sees in his children a disposition to wander from him, he often brings them home by affliction. He blasts their worldly prospects, to wean them from the world; and removes beloved friends, that they may place their affections supremely upon him. But God afflicteth not willingly; "whom he loveth he chasteneth:" when he chastens, it is that he may "deal with us as sons. Happy is the man whom God correcteth. Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord."

2. *By the word spoken or read.*

To the children of God, the word comes with power. "Now are ye clean," said our Saviour to his disciples, "through the words which I have spoken unto you." The word discovers sin, and sets the heart against it: heard or read, it enlightens the understanding and purifies the affections: it "casts down every high thing which exalteth itself," and banishes from the mind evil thoughts, and all painful reflections concerning God and his government. "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, till I went into the sanctuary; then I understood their end."

The word often causes men to behold their sins, of which they have before been sensible, in another light: they now see them in all their vileness. How often does the Christian go from the house of God, with solemn truths set home

upon his heart, and with his sins in array before him. To hear a sin properly exposed and condemned sets the mind against it, and begets a determination to destroy it.

The word meditated upon has also a powerful tendency to purify the heart. While we are meditating upon the great truths of religion, or revolving divine threats and promises in the mind, the Spirit guides our thoughts, and opens to our view new and more glorious discoveries; and thus we are excited to stronger desires after holiness, and to a deeper hatred of sin. The Christian, whose heart is pure, "delights in the law of the Lord, and meditates upon it day and night."

3. *By the example of others.*

God makes use of the example of such as have fallen away, to produce in Christians a watchfulness lest they also fall. When they see that many, who "ran well for a while," finally stumble, and fall, and perish; that their seemingly strong foundation proves to be weak; then they are led to examine upon what they themselves have been building.

The example of such as hold out on their course proves eminently useful. Is a Christian faint-hearted and desponding, ready to sink under a weight of sin? Let him hear another tell of the victories he has gained over corruption, and he gathers strength at once. The enemy over which others have triumphed, has become to him less formidable. Christians greatly strengthen each other: singly, they are weak; but united, they are a strong band. Has a Christian become cold and formal, and neglectful of duty? The holy ardor of others shall rouse him from his stupidity, and inspire him with like zeal. Christians are to "provoke one another to love and good works."

4. *By the direct operations of the Spirit upon the heart.*

First, in giving a deeper insight into the corruptions of the heart. The best Christians invariably have the clearest discoveries of sin. Corruptions are not taken away till they are seen. Sin, to be repented of, must be felt. Without a deep sense of depravity, there can be no true brokenness of heart. When the Spirit removes the covering, lays open the heart of the Christian, and brings hidden sins to view, then it is that he exclaims, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults." What but a sense of sin, a sense of the deep depravity of the heart, led Paul to exclaim, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

God discovers to Christians their sins, only that they may be excited to put them away. When David saw the wickedness of his heart, so as to acknowledge that he was "shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin," then he prayed earnestly for holiness: "Create in me a clean heart, O Lord; renew a right spirit within me. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

The Spirit operates upon the hearts of Christians to purify them, *by exciting in them a strong desire to become pure.* To those whom God would cleanse from sin, he gives ardent desires after great degrees of holiness. He causes it to be their constant, fervent prayer, that they may "purify themselves, as he is pure." He suffers them not to rest satisfied with present attainments: "I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Such was the language

of an eminent apostle, and such will not fail to be the language of all whom God purifies. If any of the children of God "be otherwise minded," and are at any time prone to settle down in their present condition, God shall reveal to them their mistake, and teach them, "that now it is high time to awake out of sleep," to "cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the armor of light." From time to time the Holy Spirit will inspire the Christian with breathings after holiness, and give him earnest desires to press forward to perfection. God causes him to remember for what Christ died: "that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people." He would have those who are Christ's to imitate Christ in all things. The true Christian will be as anxious to *grow* in grace, as he was at first to *gain* grace. The object of all his prayers and of every duty will be, "that he may die unto sin, and live unto God."

The Spirit purifies the hearts of Christians *by enabling them to withdraw their affections from the world, and to place them upon God.* He whose affections are on the world cannot be devoted to God. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." If the mind is through the day filled with vain and worldly thoughts, the heart will not be prepared for its seasons of devotion. If the world engrosses all our thoughts during the week, we shall find it impossible to worship God on the Sabbath. It is the attention of the mind which nourishes corruptions; let the mind be fixed on divine objects, and corruptions will wither and die.

The Spirit purifies the hearts of Christians *by bringing them to be better acquainted with Christ.* Is the Christian looking for help too much from means? Is he striving to purify himself from his sins? The Spirit reveals to him "the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness;" and now he

can wash and be clean. The blood of Christ has given that efficacy to means, without which they would ever have proved useless and vain. The more we become acquainted with Christ, the more we know of his power; and the more we behold his excellency and glory, the more readily shall we gain conquests over sin. If we would escape from the pollutions of the world, and effectually mortify our lusts, we must "know Christ and the power of his resurrection;" we must attain to "the fellowship of his sufferings," and be "made conformable unto his death."

The Spirit purifies Christians *by shedding the love of God abroad in their hearts.* When God causes his children to be satisfied with his love, sin loses its relish; the soul no longer clings to its corruptions, which have now become odious; it looks to God for its enjoyment. Did we continually "taste that the Lord is good," we should become dead to the world. If we find pleasure in religion, we shall not seek it in forbidden objects. When the relish for sin is destroyed by the taste of a greater sweetness, sin, no longer desired, must die. Though the sweetness of heavenly things will not always fully remain, yet it will leave an impression which will cause whatever is tasted afterwards to have no relish in comparison. The taste of one sinful pleasure may destroy the relish for another; but that only which is opposite to sin, that is, *holiness*, can destroy all relish for sin.

II. *Evidences that the heart* IS NOT *purified from its corruptions.*

1. It is an evidence that the heart is not purified from its corruptions, when we *place a high value upon the things of the world.* "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye,

and the pride of life," are but remains of that "carnal heart which is enmity against God." If we set a high value upon riches and honors, or any earthly enjoyment, it is because our hearts are not purified. Our expectations from the world have often been disappointed; often have we found that earthly good cannot satisfy, and that the pleasures of sense, compared with the pleasures of religion, are vain and tasteless. Why is it, then, that we still continue to seek our enjoyments from the world? It is because our lusts are not mortified. Did we not bring the things of the world too near us, they would not be so magnified. If in our affections we rose nearer to heaven, earthly objects would appear in their true size. Ascend an eminence, or some lofty building, and look down upon the objects below, and they appear small. Thus do all things earthly appear to him who dwells near heaven.

We may not be directly engaged in earthly pursuits, and still have our affections much upon the world. If we secretly wish that we were placed in some different situation, that we were possessed of some enjoyments of which we are now destitute, and think that these things would render us happy, then are we not weaned from the world.

Again, they who derive their enjoyment principally from their talents, learning, wealth, or influence, have not purified their hearts. He that has truly overcome the world, "counts all things loss that he may win Christ."

2. It is an evidence that the heart is not purified, when we are *dissatisfied with our situation in life*.

He who is not contented in that situation in which God has placed him, but is ever wishing that his situation were different; who, instead of being thankful for the blessings he enjoys, is always desiring something which he does not pos-

sess; he who is disposed to think less of mercies than of afflictions, has a heart not purified. Most true is it, that if we cannot lead a holy and blameless life in our present situation, we should not do it though our situation were altered.

It is ever the language of the improved Christian, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." "Godliness with contentment is great gain."

A good man is sometimes heard to say, "If I were only in some different situation, then I could do more good." But this is not well. If we do all the good we can, in that situation in which God has placed us, then we do all that God requires of us. He will not call us to account for talents with which we have not been intrusted; but he will call us to account for that with which he has intrusted us, though it be but one talent.

It is true, that we ought to endeavor to place ourselves in the most advantageous situations for doing good; still, we are not to murmur, if God sees fit that we should remain in the most humble situations. He who formed us, and whose we are, knows better than we in what way we can glorify him most. One thing is certain, God will be most glorified when we are most resigned to his will.

3. It is an evidence that the heart is not purified, when we *suffer our affections to be so strongly placed upon earthly objects that we cannot part with them.*

The words of our Saviour are, "If any man come unto me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Not that we are literally to hate father and mother, or our own lives: we are commanded to love our friends, and to preserve life; but the

love we bear the Saviour is to be so much greater than that which we bear our friends, that the latter, in comparison with the former, shall be, as it were, hated. The sentiment contained in the words is plainly this: *He that hath any object nearer to his heart than Christ, cannot be the disciple of Christ.* The Saviour hath again said, "Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it;" that is, whosoever shall refuse to give up his life for the sake of Christ, shall lose eternal life.

There is great danger, lest we give to our friends that love which belongs to God. It will be well at times, for a trial of our hearts, to suppose some near friend removed, and to ask ourselves whether we should give him up without a murmur.

Nor are those whose hearts are not purified, merely unprepared to part with friends; they often find it difficult to part even with goods. Have they been deprived of earthly substance by loss or by fraud, how are their hearts filled with grief, and how long do their sorrows and repinings continue! Were the heart pure, were the affections placed supremely on God, and not on the world, they would not thus mourn the loss of a little temporal good. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth—lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven—where the treasure is, there will the heart be also."

4. It is an evidence that the heart is not purified, when there is *no regularity in our conduct; when, in whatever we do, we are inordinate.*

When a man, for a time, plunges himself into vanities and amusements, and is scarcely able to disengage himself from them; and again falls violently to study or labor, without regard to health—when he now engages so earnest-

ly in earthly pursuits, as to lose sight of heaven and the concerns of the soul; and again is so exclusively devoted to eternal things, as to forget that there are secular duties to perform; surely, he has a heart not freed from its corruptions.

If we would seek for a happy result to labors of any kind, if we would aim at progress in holiness, there must be constancy, there must be regularity in what we do. That which is done rashly and hastily, is seldom well done. Cool and deliberate conduct alone can insure success. That course of action which results from correct habits long persevered in, will be productive of the greatest good, and will best promote the peace of the soul. Sudden and violent action cannot yield "the peaceable fruits of righteousness."

If we ordinarily maintain calmness and evenness in our feelings, we shall be better prepared for those changes in life, which, in a greater or less degree, must be the lot of all. Job, because he was not exalted by prosperity, could patiently endure the trial of adversity.

5. It is an evidence that the heart is not purified, when we *indulge in envy and strife.*

"Whereas there is among you envying and strife, are ye not carnal? Charity envieth not." If to see others prospering in the world, gaining in reputation, wealth, honor, or any way better situated than ourselves, excites envy and discontent, our hearts must be greatly corrupt. Envy is as a gangrene to the soul; it eats out every virtue.

Again, if we are lovers of strife, if we are of a contentious, censorious spirit, if we cannot forgive injuries, if we are less ready to bear evil than to do evil, then are we strangers to that charity which "suffereth long and is kind,

which seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."

As ambition is a fruitful source of both envy and strife, we may add here, that worldly ambition is not consistent with the character of a purified Christian; the highest desire of the true Christian will be, to follow Him "who was meek and lowly."

6. It is an evidence that the heart is not purified, when we *cannot bear reproof.*

Were the heart pure, we should not be offended by the plainest reproofs, but should be thankful for them: we should even feel grateful to God, when we learned our faults from an enemy.

If to be reproved excites in our minds resentment and ill-will, we have lusts that are not yet mortified, our hearts are still filled with foolishness and pride. Humble Christians can ever bear reproof. David's rage was not enkindled when the prophet said to him, "Thou art the man." How far from anger was his reply! "*And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord.*" In his mind reproof produced, not anger, but repentance and humility. So humble was David on this occasion, that he recorded his crime for after ages to read.

Are there few who bear reproof in a truly Christian manner? Then there are few whose hearts are purified from corruption.

7. It is an evidence that the heart is not purified, when we *give way to sin readily.*

The more easily we are drawn into temptations, the more unmortified are our lusts. The heart which is sound, will not readily yield to sin. Does a mere spark kindle the lusts? Is an occasion for sin no sooner presented than the

passions are in a flame? Then there must exist in the heart a great preparedness for sin. Trifling temptations never overpower him who is "awake to righteousness."

8. It is an evidence that the heart is not purified, when *calling to mind former sins gives pleasure.*

He who can multiply his sins, by calling to remembrance, with delight, the days of his wickedness, must have a heart deeply polluted. Corruptions have gained a great ascendency in that mind, where the remembrance of sin, instead of producing repentance, gives pleasure. Impure, indeed, must he be, who can still find sweetness in that which has often been steeped in sorrow. Well may we be alarmed, if the recollection of former sins at times rises in our minds with pleasure; for surely, the remembrance of our wickedness should excite in us only shame, humility, and sorrow.

9. It is an evidence that the heart is not purified, when *impure, vain, and worldly thoughts disturb us in holy duties.*

"They are profane," said God of corrupt Jewish priests and prophets; "for in my house I have found their wickedness." Impure and wicked thoughts, at any time, indicate a corrupt heart; but not to be able to exclude such thoughts from the mind, when peculiarly in the presence of God, and when engaged in solemn worship, shows that the imagination is, as it were, sold to do iniquity. In seasons of devotion, grace is to be in exercise, and then, if ever, sin, vanity, and the world, are to be banished from the mind.

III. *Evidences that God is purifying the heart.* We have evidence of this,

1. *When our conflicts are principally with spiritual corruptions.*

So long as we continue under the dominion of outward and gross sins, we remain in a great degree ignorant of inward corruption. The attention being occupied with those sins which are outward, neglects those which are inward; but when, being freed from open vices, we come to direct our attention within, and aim at the subjugation of the thoughts, then we first become acquainted with the deep depravity of the heart. The true Christian, he whose heart God is purifying, ever finds his great conflict to be within. Outward vices are more easily overcome; but to eradicate pride and self-love from the heart, to bring "every thought into captivity to Christ"—this is, indeed, a work of difficulty.

Whenever God purifies the hearts of Christians, he causes them to look within, he discovers to them inward sins. It is with these they contend; and they find the conflict hard. The most eminent Christians have their conflicts with sin; indeed, without them it is impossible to become eminently holy. Attainments in holiness are in proportion to victories over sin; the Christian's fruits are fruits of labor; he gains no victories without combats. Even Paul found that "when he would do good, evil was present with him;" that there was "a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin." It was this which led him to exclaim, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" All Christians who mortify their lusts have similar conflicts. They find that the Christian life is indeed a "warfare;" and that to "fight the good fight," they have need of "the whole armor of God."

Let us try ourselves. Are we endeavoring to cleanse ourselves from all pollutions, both of flesh and spirit? Have

we daily conflicts with in-dwelling sin? If it be otherwise with us, God is not purifying our hearts of their corruptions.

2. *When we have a greater relish for the spiritual word.*

In proportion as God purifies the hearts of Christians, their attention is directed more to those parts of Scripture which lay open the recesses of the soul, and bring hidden sins to view; they reflect more upon the strict holiness and spiritual worship, which the word of God enjoins; they better relish plain and pungent discourses from the pulpit, close and humbling doctrines, and all such reading and conversation as is most serious and practical. The true Christian is ever pleased with that which leads to close examination. He is not afraid to examine himself; he delights to bring his principles and practice to the trial of God's holy word. It is his daily fervent prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

3. *When we can habitually and cheerfully deny ourselves.*

"If any man will come after me," said Christ, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross." The practice of self-denial is by no means the easiest of the Christian's duties. It requires a heart thoroughly purged of its corruptions. It is a duty, though connected with some situations more than others, from which no situation can exempt us. All who are solicitous for the glory of God, their own good, and the good of others, will be called to the practice of it every day and hour of their life.

But the difficulty of the duty does not in the least diminish its importance. The practice of it is inseparably connected with a Christian life. He who cannot deny himself, has not yet mortified his lusts; he has not yet loosed the

cords which bind him to sin and the world. The apostles and primitive Christians could deny themselves. Paul "counted not his life dear unto him, so that he might finish his course with joy." His whole life was a life of suffering and self-denial; "in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness; in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness." Of those who professed and preached Christ in the first ages of Christianity, some were imprisoned, some beheaded, some were committed to the flames, and others perished by the most excruciating tortures. Then Christians could deny themselves; they could "take up their cross and follow Christ," to whatever dangers they were exposed; they could do this though they knew that racks, flames, tortures, and the most cruel death awaited them.

It should be remarked, also, that we are not only to deny ourselves, but to deny ourselves readily. When God commanded Abraham to go and sacrifice his son, he hesitated not; but "rose early in the morning, and went unto the place of which God had told him."

4. *When we are led to lament our former sinful conduct, and are humbled by a view of the unprofitableness of our lives.*

"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do." All whose hearts are daily becoming more pure, look back upon their past lives with shame and regret. When they consider the infinite obligations they are under to God as their Creator and Redeemer, and remember how little they have done to promote his glory, and how often they have offended against him, they are abased, as in the dust, in his

presence. They look upon their prayers, and their best services, as imperfect, and polluted with sin; they acknowledge "all their righteousness to be as filthy rags. If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

5. *When we are constantly guarding against temptation.*

In this consists the principal safety and strength of the tried Christian. He shuns the very occasions, and fears the beginnings of sin. While he prays, "lead me not into temptation," he is careful that he does not rush into it. He stands not to parley with the enemy, but repels his first attacks. He guards so effectually against danger as to leave no chance for surprises. He keeps his armor ever on, and his weapons at hand. "Happy is the man who feareth always."

No. 62.

TWENTY-TWO PLAIN REASONS

FOR

NOT BEING A ROMAN CATHOLIC.

SHOWING THE INCONSISTENCY OF THE PROMINENT ERRORS OF POPERY, NOT ONLY WITH THE AUTHORIZED VERSION OF THE BIBLE, BUT WITH THE DOUAY, OR ROMAN CATHOLIC VERSION.

I. SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

BECAUSE the doctrine of the sacrifice of the mass, declared in the Council of Trent,* (Sess. 22, cap. 2, and can. 3,) to be "a true propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead," is most plainly contrary both to the letter and the spirit of God's word.

AUTHORIZED VERSION.	DOUAY VERSION.
Heb. 7: 26–28. "Such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who *needeth not daily*, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did ONCE, when he offered up himself."	Heb. 7: 26–28. "It was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, who *needeth not daily*, as the other priests, to offer sacrifices first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did ONCE in offering himself."
Hebrews 9: 11, 12. "Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of	Heb. 9: 11, 12. "But Christ being come a high priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is, not of this

* The Council of Trent was the last General Roman Catholic Council. It sat many years, and gave judgment on many important matters; and its decisions in matters of faith are the standard of faith in the Church of Rome to this day.

this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in *once* into the holy place, *having obtained eternal redemption for us.*"

creation, neither by the blood of goats or of calves, but by his own blood, entered *once* into the holies, having *obtained eternal redemption.*"

So likewise, in verse 22, it is distinctly declared by the apostle that

"*Without shedding of blood is no remission.*"

"*Without shedding of blood there is no remission.*"

* And again, verses 24–28. "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. *Nor yet that he should offer himself often,* as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now *once* in the end of the world hath he appeared, *to put away sin* by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men *once to die,* but after this the judgment; so Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

* And again, verses 24–28. "For Jesus is not entered into the sanctuary made with hands, the pattern of the true, but into heaven itself, that he may appear now in the presence of God for us. *Nor yet that he should offer himself often,*" [*as the Council of Trent says he does in the sacrifice of the mass,*] "as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others; for then he ought to have suffered often from the beginning of the world; but now *once* at the end of ages he hath appeared for the *destruction of sin by the sacrifice of himself.* And as it is appointed for men *once* to die, and after this the judgment; *so* also Christ *was offered once, to exhaust* (αθεκειν) the sins of many."

Again, Heb. 10: 12–18. "This man, after he had offered *one sacrifice* for sins, *for ever sat down on the right hand of God;* from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool; for by *one offering he hath perfected*

Again, Heb. 10: 12–18. "But this man, offering *one sacrifice for sins,* for ever sitteth on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting until his enemies be made his footstool; *for by one oblation he hath perfected for ever them*

* In the parallel columns of texts throughout this Tract, the first column is the authorized, and the right hand column the Douay version.

for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us; for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now, where remission of these is, there *is* NO MORE *offering for sin.*"

that are sanctified. And the Holy Ghost also doth testify this to us. For after that he had said, And this is the covenant which I will make unto them after those days, saith the Lord. I will give my laws to their hearts, and on their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more. *Now, where there is a remission of these, there is* NO MORE *an oblation for sin.*"

Exactly similar, also, are the words of the blessed Jesus himself:

John 17: 4. "I have glorified thee on the earth; *I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*"

John 17: 4. "I have glorified thee on the earth; *I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*"

Now, that work assuredly was, to make a full atonement for the sins of men, by an all-sufficient sacrifice, of which the Lord Jesus has, in this passage, and again in chap 19: 30, while hanging on the cross, so distinctly said that "IT IS FINISHED."

John 19: 30. "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, *It is finished;* and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

John 19: 30. "When Jesus therefore had taken the vinegar, he said, *It is consummated;* and bowing his head, he gave up the ghost."

From hence, then, it is perfectly evident, first, that there can be no sacrifice for sins in the mass, because there is in it no shedding of blood or taking away of life, *without which there can be no remission of sin;* and secondly, that neither Jews nor Christians *need* now any sacrifice for sins, except the *one* offering of the Lord Jesus, *once offered upon the cross,* by which, the apostle tells us, those *that are sanctified* (that is, by divine grace converted from sin to holiness,

spiritually renewed by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost) *are perfected:* made complete in all things necessary to their salvation. Now, the one sacrifice of the cross is that by which the gift of the Holy Spirit is obtained for sinners; as we learn from

Heb. 10: 10. "By the which will *we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*"

Heb. 10: 10. "By the which will we are sanctified, by the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ *once.*"

And it is by the grace of the same Holy Spirit that the benefit of this sacrifice is applied to the souls of believers; as is evident from

John 16: 14. "He" [the Comforter, or Spirit of Truth] "shall glorify me: for *He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you;*"

John 16: 14. "He shall glorify me, because he shall receive of mine and shall show *it* to you;"

and not, as is most vainly and unscripturally asserted in the Church of Rome, by a new offering of the Lord Jesus *unbloodily* in the mass; who, as the apostle here tells us, *needeth not to offer himself daily*, seeing he has done so *once* upon the cross, *to put away* the sins of many.

The only possible way in which Roman Catholics can attempt to evade this most decisive reasoning of St. Paul, in these chapters of his Epistle to the Hebrews, is, by saying that they refer only to the Jewish sacrifices under the Mosaical law. But this is not true; for, first, St. Paul lays it down as a general principle, chap. 10: 1, 2, that the existence of one complete sacrifice that could "make the comers thereunto perfect," puts an end to all others; "for then," says he, "*would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers, once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins*"—no need of any thing else to wash away the stains of guilt and sin. That one sacrifice, therefore, which did away the typical sacrifices of the Jewish

law, *renders every other sacrifice*, or *the repetition of the same, were it possible, both unnecessary and improper*. Moreover, secondly, there is in this very chapter *distinct mention made of its reference to Gospel dispensation*, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, 31 : 33, here quoted by the apostle :

Hebrews 10 : 16–18. "This is the covenant that I will make with them *after those days*," [that is, in the times of the Messiah,] "saith the Lord : I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them ; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now, where remission of these is, *there is no more offering for sin*."

Heb. 10 : 16–18. "And this is the covenant which I will make with them *after those days*, [the days of the Messiah,] saith the Lord. I will give my laws to their hearts, and on their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now, where there is a remission of these, *there is no more an oblation for sin*."

From this, then, it is plain that the apostle is, in these chapters, speaking of what should be in the times of the New, no less than of what was under the Old Testament ; and, therefore, after the one sacrifice upon the cross, by which remission of sin is obtained, there is under the Gospel, as well as under the law, *no more offering for sin*. Let us remember, also, that this was written, not for the Hebrews only, but for all Christians ; as the same apostle declares,

2 Tim. 3 : 16. "*All Scripture* is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for *instruction in righteousness ;*"

2 Tim. 3 : 16. "*All Scripture* inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, *to instruct in justice ;*"

being intended for the edification of God's people in all times, and under all circumstances.

II. WORSHIP OF IMAGES.

Because the Church of Rome teaches (Council of Trent, Sess. 25, de invocatione, etc., concerning the worship of saints, etc.) that "images of Christ and of the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other saints, are to be had and retained,

especially in churches, and due honor and worship to be paid to them;" directly contrary to God's positive commandment.

Exod. 20 : 4, 5. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God;"

Exod. 20 : 4, 5. "Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, *nor the likeness of any thing* that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth; thou shalt not adore" [προσκυνησεις, Sept., bow down before] "them, nor serve them," etc.;

which forbids us not only to adore, or pay *divine* honor to, but *to bow down before, or pay any religious homage or worship whatsoever* to graven images of *any thing*, either *in heaven*, or on earth, or in the waters under the earth. And again, what can be more express than the prohibition in

Lev. 26 : 1. "Ye shall make you no idols nor *graven image*, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it; for I *am* the Lord your God."

Lev. 26 : 1. "I am the Lord your God, you shall not make to yourselves any idol *or graven thing*, neither shall you erect pillars nor set up a remarkable stone in your land to adore" [bow down to, or worship] "it; for I am the Lord your God."

So likewise it is said,

Deut. 4 : 15, 16. "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, (for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire,) lest *ye corrupt yourselves*, and make you a graven image, *the similitude of any figure, male or female*," etc.

Deut. 4 : 15, 16. "Keep therefore your souls carefully. You saw not any similitude in the day that the Lord God spoke to you in Horeb, from the midst of fire; lest perhaps BEING DECEIVED you might make you A GRAVEN SIMILITUDE, *or image of male or female*," etc.

And the caution is repeated a few verses after:

Deut. 4 : 23, 24. "Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the

Deut. 4 : 23, 24. "Beware lest thou ever forget the covenant of

covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or *the likeness of any thing which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee.* For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God."

the Lord thy God, which he hath made with thee, and make to thyself A GRAVEN LIKENESS *of those things which the Lord hath forbid to be made.* Because the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, a jealous God."

Thus clear and explicit is Holy Scripture in forbidding *any worship at all of images, or of God by images*, and thus fearfully opposed to Holy Scripture is the decree of the Council of Trent.

III. WORSHIP OF SAINTS.

Because the Church of Rome teaches (Council of Trent, Sess. 22, cap. 3, and Sess. 25, de invocatione, etc., concerning the worship of saints, etc.) that "it is good and useful to invoke the saints by supplication, that is, to pray to them, and implore their patronage, intercession, and mediation with God for us by their prayers:" contrary to 1 Tim. 2 : 5, which teaches us, that as there is but *one* God, *so* there is but *one Mediator*, or person who intervenes and intercedes between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

1 Tim. 2 : 5. "For there is *one God* and *one Mediator* between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

1 Tim. 2 : 5. "For there is *one God*, and *one Mediator* of God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

And contrary to Heb. 7 : 25, which declares that the Lord Christ is able and willing to save all that come unto God by Him, *of himself alone*, without any other help, through his own intercession for them:

Heb. 7 : 24, 25. "But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood; wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Heb. 7 : 24, 25. "But this, for that he continueth for ever, hath an everlasting priesthood, whereby he is able also *to save for ever* them that come to God *by him; always living to make intercession for us.*"

Plainly contrary, also, to our Lord's own words:

Matt. 4: 10. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and *him only* shalt thou serve."

Matt. 4: 10. "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore," [προσκυνησεις, worship or bow down before in religious reverence,] "and *him only* shalt thou *serve*."

And the apostle John tells us,

1 John, 2: 1. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

1 John, 2: 1. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just."

Now, if He be himself our Advocate, he is so alone; for he does not give his glory or share his office of Saviour with any other; neither do we want, nor can we look for another, without being guilty of unbelief and distrust of Him. Observe, also, that angels would permit no reverential worship or religious homage to be paid to them whatsoever, but peremptorily forbade it:

Rev. 19: 10. "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, *See thou do it not:* I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Rev. 19: 10. "And I fell down before his feet to adore" [worship] "him. And he saith to me, *See thou do it not:* I am thy fellow-servant," [so are the saints, and therefore this reason equally applies to them,] "and of thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Adore" [worship] "God."

And Rev. 22: 8, 9. "I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, *See thou do it not;* for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God."

And Rev. 22: 8, 9. "I fell down to adore" [worship] "before the feet of the angel who showed me these things, and he said to me, *See thou do it not;* for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them that keep the words of the prophecy of this book. Adore" [worship] "God."

IV. SUPREMACY.

Because the Church of Rome teaches (Council of Trent, the bull of Pope Pius, super forma sacramenti, etc., concerning the form of an oath, etc.) that "Peter was the *prince* or *chief* of the apostles, the supreme head of Christ's church upon earth, and the *Vicar or representative of Jesus Christ*, and that the Pope is, in all these things, his successor;" contrary to the plain words of Christ himself:

Matt. 23: 8. "Be not ye called Rabbi;" [Master, that is, in a spiritual sense;] "for *one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.*"

Matt. 23: 8. "But be not you called Rabbi; for one is your Master, and *all you are brethren.*"

Also contrary to

Mark 9: 33–35. "And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house, he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves *who should be the greatest.* And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man *desire to be first, the same shall be last of all,* and servant of all."

Mark 9: 32–34. "And they came to Capharnaum. And when they were in the house, he asked them, What did you treat of in the way? But they held their peace; for in the way they had disputed among themselves *which of them should be the greatest.* And sitting down, he called the twelve, and saith to them, If any man *desire to be first, he shall be the last of all,* and the servant of all."

And equally in opposition to Matt. 18: 1–3; in which Scriptures our Saviour teaches his apostles that there should be *no worldly preëminence at all among them*—no difference of authority and rank, or superiority of one above another; but, on the contrary, that the most humble, and he that was least among them, *whoever he was,* should be the greatest; and he condemns even the very desire of it. Entirely at variance also with

Mark 10: 42–44. "But Jesus called them [the twelve apostles]

Mark 10: 42–44. "But Jesus calling them, said to them, You

to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But *so shall it not be among you:* but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister; and whosoever of you will be the *chiefest, shall be servant of all;*"

know that they who seem to rule over the Gentiles, lord it over them, and their princes have power over them: but it *is not so among you;* but whosoever will be greater, shall be your minister; and whosoever will be *first among you,* shall be the servant of all;"

and not their supreme head or prince, as the Council of Trent declares.

V. PRIESTS' PRAYERS.

Because the Church of Rome teaches her poor ignorant people, at the mere discretion of the priest, to say over so many *aves* and *paters* as he thinks fit to appoint, by way of praying, and as a satisfaction for sins they have committed; evidently contrary to our blessed Lord's command,

Matt. 6: 7. "But when ye pray, *use not vain repetitions,* as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

Matt. 6: 7. "And when you are praying, speak not much," [μη βαττολογησητε, literally, speak not as a stutterer, who says his words over and over,] "as the heathens."

Which forbids the repetition of prayers without a distinct meaning, called here *vain repetitions,* such as a bead-roll of aves and paters certainly are, being done neither with the spirit nor with the understanding, according to what St. Paul directs,

1 Cor. 14: 14, 15. "If I *pray in an unknown tongue,* my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray *with the spirit,* and I will pray *with the understanding also.*"

1 Cor. 14: 14, 15. "For if I pray in a tongue," [that I do not understand,] "*my spirit* prayeth, but *my understanding is without fruit.* What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, *I will pray also with the understanding.*"

Surely, then, they who say just the very same words over

and over and over again, and that in a language unknown to them, do neither pray with the spirit nor with the understanding; but, like the heathens, "*think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*"

VI. PRAYER IN AN UNKNOWN TONGUE.

Because the Church of Rome has the greater part of her public service and prayers said in a tongue which her people do not understand; contrary to St. Paul's direction, 1 Cor. 14 : 1–19; and especially to verse 9.

1 Cor. 14 : 9. "Except ye utter by the tongue *words easy to be understood*, how shall it be known what is spoken? *for ye shall speak into the air.*"

And to verses 16, 17. "Else, when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, *seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?*"

And also to verse 19. "Yet in the church I had rather speak *five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also,* than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

1 Cor. 14 : 9. "So likewise you, except you utter by the tongue *plain speech*, how shall it be known what is spoken? *For you shall be speaking into the air.*"

And to verses 16, 17. "Else if thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that *holdeth the place of the unlearned* say Amen to thy blessing? *because he knoweth not what thou sayest.* For thou indeed givest thanks well, *but the other is not edified.*"

And also to verse 19. "But in the church I had rather speak *five words* with my understanding, *that I may instruct others also,* than ten thousand words in a tongue."

How sadly applicable is all this to a country like Ireland, where the priest speaks almost entirely in Latin, and the greater part of the people *are not able so much as even to read the meaning of what he says,* and where many do not understand him *even when he speaks in English!*

VII. FREE JUSTIFICATION.

Because the Church of Rome teaches, (Council of Trent, Sess. 6, can. 30, and Sess. 22, cap. 2,) "that believers in

Christ are not fully justified, that is, freed from the guilt of their sins, by faith in his atonement; but need, some of them, at least, to pass through purgatory, to be fully cleansed from sin;" directly contrary to God's word:

1 John, 1: 7. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from *all sin*."

Acts 13: 39. "And by him (Christ Jesus) *all that believe are*" [not *shall be*] "justified from *all things*, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

1 John, 1: 7. "And *the blood of Jesus Christ his Son* cleanseth us from *all sin*."

Acts 13: 39. "*In Him every one that believeth is justified*."

Also contrary to Jer. 31: 34; Mic. 7: 19; Col. 2: 13; Rom. 4: 5; and to

Rom. 3: 28. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified *by faith, without the deeds of the law*."

Rom. 5: 1. "Therefore, *being justified by faith*, we have peace with God."

Isaiah 43: 25. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions *for mine own sake*, and will not remember thy sins."

Jer. 23: 6. "And this is his name whereby he (Messiah) shall be called, *the Lord our righteousness*."

Rom. 3: 28. "For we account a man to be justified *by faith, without the works of the law*."

Rom. 5: 1. "Being *justified therefore by faith, let us have peace with God*."

Isaiah 43: 25. "I am, I am He that *blot out* thy iniquities for *my own sake*, and I will not remember thy sins."

Jer. 23: 6. "And this is the name that they shall call Him, the Lord *our Just One*."

VIII. MERIT OF WORKS.

Because the Church of Rome teaches, (Council of Trent, Sess. 6, can. 32,) "that the good works of a justified person *do truly merit* an increase of grace and *eternal life*;" contrary to our Lord's own words, addressed to his apostles:

Luke 17: 10. "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are command-

Luke 17: 10. "So you also, when you shall have done *all the things that are commanded you*,

ed you, say, We are *unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.*"

say, We are *unprofitable servants;* we have done that which we ought to do."

Now these confessedly were *justified persons;* yet our Lord and Saviour tells them expressly, that as all they could do fell short of their duty, there could not possibly be any *merit* in their works. Contrary also to

Job 22 : 3. "Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?"

Job 35 : 7. "If thou be righteous, what givest thou him, or what receiveth he of thine hand?"

Job 22 : 3. "What doth it profit God if thou be just; or what dost thou give him if thy way be unspotted?"

Job 35 : 7. "And if thou do justly, what shalt thou give him, or what shall he receive of thy hand?"

Isaiah 64 : 6. "All our righteousnesses" [that is, works of obedience] "are as filthy rags."

Isaiah 64 : 6. "All our justices are as an unclean rag."

Nor is it less opposed to

Eph. 2 : 8, 9. "By grace" [that is, by free, unmerited favor] "are ye saved, *through faith,* and that *not of yourselves;* it is the gift of God: *not of works,* lest any man should boast."

Eph. 2 : 8, 9. "For by grace you are saved *through faith,* and that *not of yourselves;* for it is the gift of God; *not of works,* that no man may glory."

IX. UNWRITTEN TRADITION.

Because the Church of Rome teaches (Council of Trent, Sess. 4, decretum de canonicis Scripturis, decree concerning the canonical Scriptures) that "*unwritten traditions* pertaining to faith as well as to manners or morals, [mores,] are to be received with *equal affection of piety and reverence* as the books of the Old and New Testament:" contrary to the command of God,

Deut. 4 : 2. "Ye shall *not add unto the word which I command you,* neither shall ye diminish aught from it."

Deut. 4 : 2. "You shall not *add to the word that I speak to you,* neither shall you take away from it."

Prov. 30 : 6. "*Add thou not unto his words,* lest he reprove thee, and thou be *found a liar.*"

Prov. 30 : 6. "*Add not any thing to his words,* lest thou be reproved and *found a liar.*"

Also to Matt. 15 : 3, and to

Rev. 22 : 18. "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of *this book;* if any man shall *add unto these things,* God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book."

Rev. 22 : 18. "For I testify to every one that heareth the words of the prophecy of *this book;* if any man *shall add to these things,* God shall add unto him the plagues written in this book."

This they do, moreover, without being able to trace up one single tradition, *not written in Scripture or warranted by it,* to the mouth either of Christ or his apostles. Besides, the *written word* is the only standard of truth which divine authority admits; for what saith the Scriptures?

Isa. 8 : 20. "To the law and to the testimony, *if they speak not according to* THIS WORD, it is because there is *no light in them.*"

Isa. 8 : 20. "*To the law rather, and to the testimony,* and if they speak not *according to this word,* they shall not have the morning light."

And so likewise the Lord Jesus refers to the *written word* as the standard of divine truth,

Luke 16 : 29. "They have Moses and the prophets;" [that is, not themselves, but their *writings;*] "*let them hear them.*"

Luke 16 : 29. "And Abraham said to him, they have *Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.*"

Now, we have not only Moses and the prophets, but also Jesus Christ and his apostles, in the *written word:* let us therefore *hear them.*

X. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ONLY.

Because the Church of Rome teaches, (Council of Trent, Sess. 6, can. 9 and 12,) that "*trust in the divine mercy remitting sins for the sake of Christ, is not justifying faith* and that alone by which we are justified before God;" contrary to

Rom. 3 : 24. "Being *justified freely* by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;" connected with

Verse 28. "Therefore we conclude that a man is *justified by faith without the deeds of the law;*" [that is, *by faith alone.*]

Rom. 3 : 24. "Being *justified freely* by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Rom. 3 : 28. "For we account a man to be justified *by faith without the works of the law;*" [that is, *by faith alone.*]

Contrary also to

Rom. 4 : 5. "But to him that worketh not, but *believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly,*" [that is, chap. 3 : 26, trusts in the mercy of God through Christ,] "*his faith is counted for righteousness.*"

Rom. 4 : 5. "But to him that *worketh not,* yet believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, *his faith is reputed to justice.*"

Equally contrary also to

Genesis 15 : 6. "Abraham "believed in the Lord, and he *counted it to him for righteousness.*"

Genesis 15 : 6. Abraham "believed God, and it *was reputed to him unto justice.*"

From all which Scriptures it is perfeetly plain that sinful, fallen man, is justified before God by faith, that is, trust in his mercy through Christ, and *by that alone*, which this canon denies. It is not the import of these Scriptures, that true faith is without works, but that it is faith only, or alone, that *justifies*. Faith, indeed, cannot be true faith without works; for, says the apostle, Gal. 5 : 6, "faith *worketh* by love."

XI. COMMUNION IN BOTH KINDS.

Because the Church of Rome (Council of Trent, Sess. 21, can. 1, concerning the communion) "pronounces any one accursed who says that, by the command of God, or necessity of salvation, all and each of the faithful in Christ ought to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist in both kinds;" whereas our Lord Jesus Christ himself says directly the contrary, Luke 22 : 19, 20; also,

Matt. 26 : 26–29. "And as they were eating, Jesus took

Matt. 26 : 26–29. "And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took

bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, *Drink ye all of it;* for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth *of this fruit of the vine,* until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

bread, and blessed, and broke, and gave to his disciples, and said, Take ye and eat; this is my body. And taking the chalice, he gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, *Drink ye all of this;* for this is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many for the remission of sins. And I say to you, I will not drink from henceforth *of this fruit of the vine,* until that day when I shall drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father."

Mark 14 : 22, 23. "And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and *they all drank of it.*"

Mark 14 : 22,23. "And whilst they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessing, broke, and gave to them, and said, Take ye, this is my body. And having taken the chalice, giving thanks, he gave it to them, *and they all drank of it.*"

Hence it appears, then, that he instituted it *in both kinds,* and commanded *all who partook of the one, to partake of the other,* both being done together in remembrance of his body broken, and his blood poured out, which *neither could represent separately;* and said *of the wine in particular,* Matt. 26 : 27, "*Drink ye all of this.*" By which it is plain, from the very express words of Holy Scripture, that there is no sacrament at all *as ordained by Christ,* unless it be celebrated *in both kinds;* which, therefore, by the command of God, and *for the validity of the sacrament,* is certainly to be done; as the apostle directs,

1 Cor. 11 : 28. "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, *and* drink of that cup."

1 Cor. 11 : 28. "But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread, *and* drink of the chalice."

Could any command be plainer? In fact, we are not authorized to take the one without the other.

XII. INTENTION.

Because the Church of Rome teaches, (Council of Trent, Sess. 7, can. 11, concerning the sacraments,) "that in ministers, while they celebrate and administer the sacraments, there is required *an intention of doing at least what the church does;*" that is, that the intention of the officiating priest *is absolutely necessary to the validity of a sacrament*, of which not one word is to be found in Scripture, and which, if true, would entirely overthrow all certainty as to the validity of the administration of any sacrament of their church whatsoever. In fact, if this canon be founded in truth, no one, minister or private person, in the Roman Catholic Church, can possibly, according to his own principles, be sure that he has been either baptized, ordained, or married; or that he ever received any sacrament in reality at all; and therefore, that he is not committing downright idolatry every time he worships the host. What a state, then, must the Roman Catholic world be in, *if this canon be true! and if it be not true*, what is the infallibility of the church worth? and what will become of the boasted infallibility of councils, whose validity can alone depend on the validity of the ordination of the ecclesiastics composing them?

XIII. INFALLIBILITY.

Because the Church of Rome grounds a claim to infallibility and supreme authority *on the testimony of Scripture*, while, at the same time, it asserts that the infallibility and authority of Scripture depends on the word of the church. Now, this is both irrational and untrue; for, admitting even that they knew THE EXISTENCE of their church, *independent of the Scriptures*, yet—as they show by having recourse to them for their proof—they acknowledge they cannot prove their church *to be either infallible or supreme*, but *from the Scriptures*. Before, however, they can establish the infalli-

bility of their church from the Bible, they must first establish the infallibility of the Bible itself, that is, its authenticity and inspiration; as otherwise its testimony is not of weight, and may be untrue.

It is clear, therefore, that the alleged infallibility of their church, even on their own grounds, depends on the infallibility of the Holy Scriptures; and thence it follows, that the Bible must *first be admitted to be the infallible word of God, before their church's claim of infallibility or supremacy can be at all allowed.* Their church, then, can only depend on the Bible, and not the Bible on their church. We must have something certain and infallible to plant our first step upon; and their only way of proving the infallibility of their church, is *by appealing to Scripture.* Their church's infallibility, therefore, even were it true, can never be proved *until that of the Bible is first admitted.*

Christ having established a church on earth, is no proof that that church is infallible; its existence does not imply its infallibility—nor are the alleged marks of the true church taken from the Nicene creed in proof of it, of any weight or value, *except so far as they agree with the acknowledged word of God;* for the creed itself is a mere human, uninspired composition. The Bible, therefore, and the Bible alone, both *proves the true church and shows its privileges;* and therefore the Roman Catholic Church *cannot give to the Bible what she herself claims to receive from the Bible—infallibility!*

XIV. CONSENT OF THE FATHERS.

Because the Church of Rome (Council of Trent, Sess. 4, Decretum de canonicis Scripturis, Decree concerning the canonical Scriptures) "forbids that any should *dare to interpret* Holy Scripture contrary to the sense in which she herself holds, or contrary to the *unanimous consent* of the

Fathers;" although she has never yet given an *authorized interpretation or exposition* of Scripture *in the sense which she holds;* and although the Fathers, so far from being unanimous on such points, agree together scarcely on one point of doctrine not absolutely determined in Scripture.

XV. APOCRYPHA.

Because the Church of Rome (Council of Trent, Sess. 4, Decretum de canonicis Scripturis, Decree concerning the canonical Scriptures) teaches, "that every one is accursed who does not receive the apocryphal books, Judith, Tobit, Wisdom, 1st and 2d Maccabees, etc., *in all their parts*, as sacred and canonical Scriptures;" although they never existed in the Hebrew language; are now, and ever have been, utterly rejected by the Jews, to whom, Rom. 3: 2, "were committed the oracles of God" in the Old Testament, *of which these are said to be a part;* although they were *never quoted or acknowledged by our Lord and his apostles;* although they contain manifest contradictions and historical falsehoods: compare 1 Mac. 6: 4–16, with 2 Mac. 1: 13–16, and 9: 28; Bar. 1: 2, with Jeremiah the prophet, 43: 6, 7; 2 Mac. 14: 41–46, with Tob. 6: 6, 8, 16, 17, etc.; although they were rejected by St. Jerome himself, the translator of the Vulgate, and declared by him *not to be canonical.* Besides all which, they were disowned by St. Athanasius, who draws a line of distinction between these very identical books, and those which he delivers as divinely inspired; and, finally, they were rejected by the Council of Laodicea in the fourth century, which gives a catalogue of the inspired books appointed to be read publicly, exactly agreeing with St. Jerome and the present Protestant canon of Scripture, excepting the book of the Apocalypse, which was not usually read in public, on account of its obscurity.

XVI. FORBIDDING THE SCRIPTURES.

Because the Church of Rome (in the fourth Rule of the Congregation of the Index,* appointed by the Council of Trent to decide as to prohibited books) pronounces against the indiscriminate reading of the Holy Scriptures, and on this all-important subject declares as follows: "Seeing it is manifest by experience, that if the Holy Scriptures be permitted to be read everywhere indiscriminately ('sine discrimine') in the vulgar tongue, *more harm than good would result thence*, through the rashness of men; let it therefore be at the pleasure of the bishop or inquisitor, with the advice of the parish priest or confessor, to permit the reading of Bibles translated by Catholic authors, to those who, in their opinion, may receive not harm, but an increase of faith and piety. This license let them have in writing. But whosoever shall presume, without such license, to read or possess them, *he cannot receive forgiveness of his sins* until such Bibles be returned to the ordinary." Does not the Church of Rome herein contradict God himself, who tells us by his prophet David,

Psalm 119: 130. "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth *understanding* unto *the simple*."

Psalm 118: 130. "The declaration of thy words *giveth light*, and giveth *understanding to little ones*."

Again, also, we read,

Prov. 30: 5. "Every word of God is pure."

Prov. 30: 5. "Every word of God is *fire-tried*;" [that is, most pure.]

And Psalm 19: 8. "The commandment of the Lord is pure, *enlightening the eyes*."

And Psalm 18: 8. "The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls."

* The "Congregation of the Index" was a Committee of the Council. Its regulations are in force. The present Pope, (1828,) in his last bull to the Roman Catholics of Ireland, urges the enforcement of these regulations, and the prelates have acted upon it in their pastoral.

So also the apostle Paul tells us, that the Holy Scriptures are to make us wise unto salvation:

2 Tim. 3: 15. "And that *from a child* thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee *wise unto salvation,* through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

2 Tim. 3: 15. "And because *from thy infancy* thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which can *instruct thee to salvation,* through the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

The Council of Trent thus forbids the indiscriminate reading of the Holy Scriptures; whereas, God *directly commands the indiscriminate* reading of his word, Isaiah 34: 16, addressed, as appears from verse 1, *to all nations and people of the earth:*

Isaiah 34: 1. "Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it."

And then follows, verse 16, "*Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read.*"

Isaiah 34: 1. Come near, *ye Gentiles,* and hear; and hearken, ye people: *let the earth hear,* and all that is therein; the world, and every thing that cometh forth of it."

And then follows, verse 16, "*Search ye diligently in the book of the Lord, and read.*"

And so also our Lord Jesus Christ commands,

John 5: 39. "*Search the Scriptures;* for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

John 5: 39. "*Search the Scriptures;* for you think in them to have life everlasting: and the same are they that give testimony of me."

Here, then, are two conflicting commands—which are we to obey? God, or the Church of Rome? Christ, or the Pope? St. Peter tells us very plainly,

Acts 4: 19. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you *more than unto God,* judge ye."

Acts 4: 19. "If it be just in the sight of God to hear you rather than God, judge ye."

XVII. THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS.

Because the Church of Rome (Council of Trent, Sess. 7, can. 1, de sacramentis in genere, concerning the sacra-

ments in kind) pronounces any one accursed who says that there are fewer than seven sacraments, or who says that *they were not all instituted or appointed by Christ our Lord himself*, "or that any one of the seven is not a sacrament;" whereas it is perfectly evident from Scripture itself, that only two sacraments, viz., baptism and the eucharist, were ever appointed by Christ, or so much as even spoken of by him *as being sacraments*. And moreover, that in the other five here mentioned, viz., confirmation, penance, extreme unction, orders, and matrimony, there is nothing whatsoever of either the nature, use, or design of a sacrament, which is an appointed *outward sign* of an *inward grace*.*

XVIII. MARRIAGE.

Because the Church of Rome teaches (Council of Trent, Sess. 24, can. 9) that the "clergy may not marry;" contrary to

Heb. 13: 4. "Marriage is honorable in *all*, and the bed undefiled."	Heb. 13: 4. "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled."
1 Cor. 7: 2. "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband."	1 Cor. 7: 2. "But for fear of fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband."

These precepts are spoken universally; and no exception is made of the clergy, or ministers of the Gospel; nor can any one show that God has excepted priests or monks. Instead of this, St. Paul says, "A bishop must be blameless, *the husband of one wife*," 1 Tim. 3: 2; Titus, 1: 6; and in his prediction of the great apostasy from the pure faith

* A sacrament may, in the words of the Catechism of the Church of Scotland, be stated to be "an holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers."

of the Gospel, he enumerates the "*forbidding to marry*" as one of the criteria of which the Holy Spirit speaks expressly. 1 Tim. 4 : 3.

XIX. THE NECESSITY OF SACRAMENTS.

Because the Church of Rome (Council of Trent, Sess. 7, can. 4 and 8, de sacramentis in genere, concerning the sacraments in kind) declares that "the sacraments *are necessary to salvation*, and that *without them, or by desire of them*, (*when they are not to be had*,) through faith alone, *men cannot obtain from God the grace of justification*, although all of them are not necessary for every one;" and also, "that by the *opus operatum*, that is, *the administration of the mere external rite, grace is conferred:*" contrary, in the first instance, to

John 3 : 36. "He that *believeth* on the Son, *hath everlasting life.*"

And to Acts 16 : 31. "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou shalt be saved.*"

John 3 : 36. "He that believeth in the Son, *hath* life everlasting."

And to Acts 16 : 31. "Believe in the Lord Jesus, *and thou shalt be saved.*"

Both which Scriptures expressly declare, that whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, without any mention of the sacraments whatsoever. Contrary also, in the second instance, to

1 Pet. 3 : 21. "The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth now save us; *not the putting away of the filth of the flesh*," [that is, the washing by water,] "but the *answer of a good conscience towards God.*"

1 Pet. 3 : 21. "Whereunto baptism, being of the like form, now saves you also; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the examination of a good conscience towards God."

Whence we learn most clearly, that it is not the outward form, but the spiritual grace and inward influence which is signified, and only represented by the external ordinance, that saves us.

XX. AURICULAR CONFESSION.

Because the Church of Rome (Council of Trent, Sess. 14, can. 4 and 6, de penitentia, concerning repentance) declares, "that sacramental confession of sins is necessary to salvation *by divine right*, and that he is accursed who says that confession to a priest alone, in secret, is a human invention." Whereas it is evident that, according to Scripture, it is to God, and not to any man, or class of men, that we must confess our sins *in order to obtain forgiveness*.

Psalm 32 : 5. "I acknowledged my sin unto *thee*, and mine iniquity have I not hid ; I said, I will confess my transgressions *unto the Lord*, and THOU *forgavest the iniquity of my sin*."

Psalm 31 : 5, 6. "I have acknowledged my sin *to Thee*, and my injustice I have not concealed ; I said, I will confess against myself my injustice *to the Lord*, and thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin."

Also Psalm 51 : 4. "Against *thee, thee only*, have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight."

Also Psalm 50 : 6. "To *thee only* have I sinned, and have done evil before thee."

And moreover, neither our Saviour nor his apostles have left us any direction to confess to a priest ; a practice which has an awful tendency to mislead men into a false security ; but, on the contrary, the expression is,

James 5 : 16. "Confess your faults *one to another*, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."

James 5 : 16. "Confess, therefore, your sins, *one to another*, and pray one for another, that you may be saved."

[Enjoining on *all Christians* the duty of a mutual acknowledgment of their faults, and mutual prayer ; where shall we find auricular confession in this ?] So that, by this passage, the priest is bound to confess his sins to the people, just as much as the people to the priest ; and indeed he might do so with equal benefit ; for even the Jews who rejected Christ, could say,

Mark 2 : 7. "Who can forgive sins, but *God only ?*"

Mark 2 : 7. "*Who can forgive sins, but God only ?*"

XXI. TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

Because the Church of Rome teaches, (Council of Trent, Sess. 13, can. 1 and 2, etc., de eucharistia, concerning the Eucharist,) "that in the sacrament of the eucharist is contained, *really and substantially*, the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; there being a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into his body, and of the whole substance of the wine into his blood;" which contains a direct contradiction of God's holy word:

Psalm 16: 10, 11. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; *neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption;*"	Psalm 15: 10. "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, *nor wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption;*"

a circumstance which takes place every day, if this canon be true, notwithstanding the ingenious fancies of Roman Catholic divines to evade it. It is, moreover, a most *unnatural, forced, and unnecessary* meaning put upon a plain and very common expression in Scripture, *this is*, for *this signifies:* see Gen. 41: 26, 27; Matt. 13: 37, 39; 1 Cor. 10: 4; Gal. 4: 24; Rev. 1: 20, etc.

It is also a remarkable fact, that in the language spoken by our blessed Lord, the Syro-chaldaic, *there is no verb of the meaning of "signifies;"* so that the different apostles seem to have given a *literal translation of what he spoke, intending the words to bear the same meaning in which he used them.* It may indeed be said, that the interpretation of the Church of Rome here, is according to the *letter*. I am very sure, however, it is not according to the *spirit*. Now let us remember what is written:

2 Cor. 3: 6. "The letter *killeth*, but the *spirit giveth life.*"	2 Cor. 3: 6. "For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

This, moreover, in the most glaring manner contradicts the 2d Council of Nice, the 7th General Council, according

to the Roman Catholic Church, which "anathematizes any who say that Christ is not circumscribed as to his humanity," that is, limited as to his human nature; and asserts, "that he is present on earth, *not sensibly, but only in his divinity*," that is, as Protestants believe, in a spiritual manner. And does He not say the same himself?

John 17: 11. "And now *I am no more in the world*," [that is, as to his bodily or substantial presence,] but these are in the world, and I come to thee."

John 17: 11. "And now *I am not in the world*, and these are in the world, and I come to thee."

That is, since (chap. 14: 23) he is ever present on earth by his Spirit, that his body is not now on earth, but in heaven.

XXII. ATTRITION.

Because the Church of Rome teaches, (Council of Trent, Sess. 14, de penitentia, concerning repentance, can. 4, concerning contrition,) that the imperfect contrition called *attrition*, arising commonly from a mere sense of the turpitude of sin, and fear of hell and its pains, (if its subject disavows the intention of sinning in hope of pardon,) although it cannot of itself, *without the sacrament of penance*, conduct the sinner to justification, yet it disposes him to seek the grace of God in penance. Whereas St. Paul tells us, that the efficacy of a sacrament is in the *heart and in the spirit*, not in *the form* or *letter*.

Rom. 2: 28, 29. "For he is not a Jew, which is one *outwardly;* neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew" [and so likewise he is a Christian] "which is one *inwardly;* and circumcision is that *of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter*."

2 Cor. 7: 10. "*Godly sorrow* worketh repentance to salvation

"Rom. 2: 28, 29. "For it is not he is a Jew, that is so outwardly; nor is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew that is one inwardly; and the circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." And again, in

2 Cor. 7: 10. "For the sorrow that is according to God, worketh

not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death;"

penance" [repentance] "steadfast unto salvation; but the sorrow of the world worketh death;"

by which he plainly teaches us, that it is *godly sorrow*, sorrow arising from true repentance and a change of heart, and that only, that worketh repentance unto salvation: whereas, on the other hand, he as plainly asserts that the *sorrow of the world worketh death*. Now, of this latter description exactly is "attrition;" a sorrow for sin, not accompanied by true faith and a hope of pardon; and, therefore, to say that a sinner can be justified before a holy and heart-searching God by attrition, along with the outward administration of the sacrament of penance, is plainly contrary to the above words of St. Paul, as well as to the fearful words of our Lord and Saviour himself,

Mark 16: 16. "*He that believeth not, shall be damned;*"

Mark 16: 16. "He that *believeth not,* shall be condemned;"

because the apostle informs us,

Heb. 11: 6. "*Without faith it is impossible to please God.*"

Heb. 11: 6. "But *without faith* it is impossible to please God."

Now, without being *really contrite*, a man can have neither true repentance, faith, nor love, and therefore cannot be in a state of justification, as this Council asserts.

These, then, are some of the principal reasons why I am, and must ever be, a Protestant. As such, indeed, my objections to the creed of the Church of Rome are built, not upon the authority of the Douay Bible, which contains, I hesitate not to say, many false, most erroneous, and misleading translations of different important passages of the word of the living God; but upon the authority of the English authorized version of the Bible; the original Hebrew and the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, so often quoted by our Lord and his apostles;

and the Greek original of the New Testament: on these I build my faith, and from these I take my decided objections to that of the Church of Rome.

I wished, however, to go farther than this, and show why I am, and I conceive all others ought to be, Protestants, even upon the grounds of Roman Catholics themselves. I have therefore given the several passages quoted both from the authorized version and as they are found in the Douay Bible also, in order to prove from the acknowledged Scriptures and authorized books of the Church of Rome herself, that there is neither Scriptural truth nor consistency in her peculiar doctrines. As, therefore, Roman Catholics admit the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, which their church claims a right, indeed, *to interpret*, but surely not to *contradict*, they are in conscience bound seriously and candidly to consider what I have now set before them, and to which I entreat their earnest attention, viz., the manifest opposition that exists between the canons and decrees of the Council of Trent and the word of the living God, not only as contained in the Protestant version of the Scriptures, but as contained in their own acknowledged version of them, the Douay Bible. This I have clearly proved; and I say, therefore, that one or the other must be false; for truth cannot contradict itself. Now, they allow that the Bible is true; and from hence it follows, that the canons and decrees of the Council of Trent, which contradict the Bible, are false.

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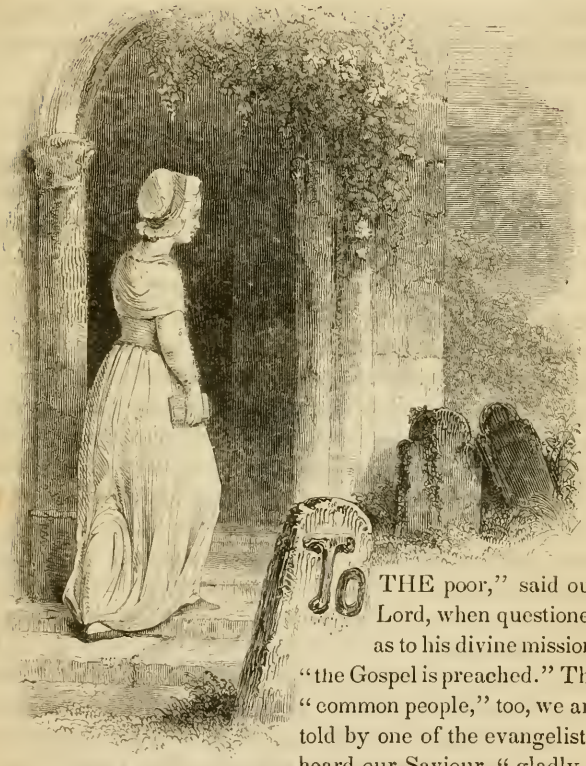
THE

COTTAGER'S WIFE.



"THE poor," said our Lord, when questioned as to his divine mission, "the Gospel is preached." The "common people," too, we are told by one of the evangelists, heard our Saviour "gladly." St. Paul declares, that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." And St. James asks, whether it is not notorious, that God hath chosen the "*poor* of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him." The subsequent history of the church of Christ presents a similar

testimony. To the poor the Gospel hath still been preached, and by them it has, in general, been most favorably received. Among this humble class, some of the most striking instances of the power and grace of Christ have been exhibited; and by them have the rich blessings of his Gospel been frequently most highly prized, and most purely enjoyed.

In adding another proof of the truth of these remarks, from an example which lately fell under my own observation, my only motives are to display the glory of the Redeemer and the excellency of the Gospel; and to draw from a simple statement of facts, a few plain but important lessons of instruction and consolation, for the benefit of my Christian brethren.

I was lately called to undertake the pastoral care of a small parish, in one of the inland counties. My predecessor, now gone to give up his account to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, was a man of considerable talents and learning; of sincere piety, and most amiable manners. In his parish, his preaching and private exertions had produced a remarkable degree of regularity and decency of manners among the poor people, of whom it was almost exclusively composed. How far his labors were blessed in producing those genuine and unequivocal fruits of repentance and faith in the heart of any of his parishioners, which every zealous minister is anxious to perceive, I am as yet scarcely competent to determine. Yet in the case of the person of whom I am now about to give you a short account, I found that he had been instrumental of much good, both by his sermons, his private instructions, and the books which he had given her.

I had officiated but once in my parish, when I was told that there was a poor young woman, supposed to be in a decline, who wished to see me. I accordingly took an early opportunity of calling on her. As I resided about two miles from the village, and could have, as yet, but a slight acquaintance with the characters of its inhabitants, I was employed on my way, in considering in what manner I might be likely to ren-

der my visit most profitable to my poor patient. My clerical brethren, and indeed all those who have been in the habit of attending the sick-beds, whether of the rich or the poor, will readily enter into the anxiety and perplexity of my thoughts upon such a subject. They will not be surprised that my expectations, as to the actual state of the sick person, were not very favorable; and that I rather feared to find, what is so commonly met with on these occasions, either great insensibility and unconcern, or a false and ill-grounded satisfaction and confidence in the goodness and safety of her condition. It is a melancholy consideration, that there should in general be so much ground for such apprehensions; and while it shows the vast importance of a parochial ministry, it may serve to quicken those who are engaged in it, to the diligent use of every means of awakening and instructing their flocks.

Absorbed in this painful but profitable train of thought, I arrived at the village, and was soon directed, by my clerk's daughter, to one of the smallest cottages I had ever seen. On lifting the latch of this lowly dwelling, I was struck with the remarkable cleanliness and neatness of every part of it. The furniture, though of the humblest kind, was decent, and in the most perfect order, and various traces might be perceived of the industry and care of the mistress of this little abode, though she had now been confined for some weeks to her bed. The cottage consisted but of two small rooms, separated by a few stairs, or rather steps, which led from the one to the other. I was met at my entrance by a pleasing looking elderly woman, holding in her arms an infant a few months old.

"I heard," said I, "that a young woman was ill here, and I have called to see her. Are you her mother?"

"I am her husband's mother, sir, and this is her little child. Poor, dear babe, he has never known the comfort of his mother, and I am very much afraid he will soon lose her."

"I am sorry," said I, "to hear she is so ill. Would she like to see me now, do you think?"

"O yes, sir, that I am sure she will."

This answer was made in so unusual a tone of confidence and apparent welcome, that I could not help hailing it as a token for good. How often, alas, are ministers received with a degree of coldness and indifference, in their visits to the sick, which too plainly proves that these labors of love are but slightly valued, if at all desired.

The reply was no sooner made, than I followed the good woman into the sick room. It was a little apartment formed out of the roof of the cottage, open to the stairs, and without any means of warming it by a fire. The walls were whitewashed, and it had one very small casement, which its neat but afflicted tenant had adorned with a little muslin curtain. On a bedstead, just raised from the floor, and without any curtain to shelter her from the keen air of winter, lay the poor object of my visit, apparently far advanced in a consumption. "Alas," thought I, "this is but a comfortless accommodation for one in such a disorder! How many in the midst of health, would think themselves hardly used, to be obliged to content themselves with such an apartment? Can I ever murmur at any circumstances in my own comparatively favored lot? Forbid it, Lord, and forgive the repining thoughts which have sometimes found admission into my mind. O, make me thankful for my superior blessings; and in whatsoever state I am, let me learn therewith to be content." These and similar thoughts passed rapidly through my mind as I approached the bedside of my poor parishioner.

"M——," said her mother-in-law, "here is the minister come to see you."

"I am very glad to see him," was the immediate answer, "and greatly obliged to him for coming so far in this cold weather."

"How do you find yourself?" said I.

"I am very ill, sir, and feel that I am getting weaker every day."

"How long have you been ill?"

"Three and twenty weeks, sir. I have never been well since the birth of my poor babe, and I begin to think that I shall never recover."

I perceived at once, by the hectic flush upon her cheek, and by the difficulty with which she breathed, that her apprehensions were but too well founded, and therefore determined to lose no time in examining the state of her mind as to religion.

"Your illness," said I, "has indeed been very long, and seems now to be very serious; but this is *the Lord's doing;* it is *He* who has laid you on the bed of sickness; and the length of your confinement has given you a very merciful opportunity of thinking upon religion, and the concerns of your soul. I hope you have improved it."

"I have tried to do so, sir."

"I am glad to hear you say so; but let me have a little serious conversation with you upon this subject."

"That is what I greatly desire, sir."

"Religion, you know, should be the great business of our lives, whether in health or sickness, but especially in sickness; and since your state seems very uncertain, let me ask you what you think about it. If it should please God that you should not recover, what hope have you as to another world?"

Those who know by painful experience the answers which are commonly made both by the rich and the poor to such a question, will judge of the surprise and pleasure I felt on hearing a very different reply from my afflicted parishioner. In feeble accents, broken and interrupted by her cough and laboring breath, she spoke, as nearly as I can recollect, as follows:

"Sir, I know and acknowledge that I am a poor, miserable sinner; a great sinner, sir. I do not mean, that I ever committed any very heinous crime; but notwithstanding

this, I know and feel that I am a very sinful creature. I have endeavored, sir, during my long illness, to call to mind my past life; and as nearly as I can remember, *I have spread all my sins before God*, and earnestly begged his forgiveness through Jesus Christ. I know and believe that he is the only Saviour of sinners; I put my whole trust in him; and I hope I have *come* to him; I know that he is a merciful Saviour; but, sir," (and here she burst into tears,) "when I reflect upon my vileness and sinfulness, I often fear that he will not receive me; and if Christ should refuse me, where shall I go, or what shall I do to be saved!"

Many of my readers will anticipate my reply to this affecting but hopeful declaration. I told my poor patient, that I was truly rejoiced to hear what she had just been saying; and that if she was sincere in what she had told me, of which indeed, from her whole air and manner, I could have but little doubt, there was much that I could say to comfort her. I said that it was a great satisfaction to me to find that she was convinced of her sinful state, and of the necessity of Christ as a Saviour, and assured her that if she came to him with a sincere and humble faith, there could be no doubt of his willingness to receive her. To confirm this, I read to her several passages of Scripture, particularly 1 Tim. 1 : 15; John 3 : 16, 17, and 6 : 37; and Matt. 11 : 28–30; to which she listened with profound and eager attention, and afterwards expressed the encouragement and consolation which they afforded her.

Fearing, however, that what had given me so much pleasure, might possibly be, at least in part, owing to a religious education, or to a merely nominal acquaintance with religious sentiments and phraseology, I inquired of my poor parishioner where she had obtained a degree of knowledge in religion which, unhappily, was but too seldom met with in visiting sick-beds.

She told me, that as long as she could remember, she

had been impressed with the fear of God, and a strong desire to be a true Christian. "When I was quite a child, sir," said she, "I had a *great dread* of the Almighty upon me." This was her exact expression, by which I doubt not she meant to describe that which the Psalmist speaks of when he says, "Even from my youth up, thy terrors have I suffered with a troubled mind." "At this early age, sir," she continued, "I remember that I often left my companions to engage in prayer; and as I grew up, and went into the fields to work with other young people, I have sometimes been so full of thought and anxiety about my soul, that I have spoken of what I was thinking aloud, and now and then uttered a short prayer; upon which my companions generally laughed, and called me by some nickname. My greatest delight, sir, was to go to church; and as I had a very good memory," proofs of which she frequently gave me in the course of my visits, "I was able to remember a great many texts of Scripture, which I used to think of when I was by myself. I recollect to this hour, sir, some of the sermons I heard when I was quite young. At that time, my great desire was to become prepared to partake of the Lord's supper; and I often begged some of my friends to read to me upon the subject. After this I learned to read myself, and O, what a great blessing I have found it to read the word of God!"

The preceding account of the early feelings and dispositions of this poor young woman satisfied me that the grace of God had visited her heart, and had long been drawing her to an acquaintance with himself, and with her Redeemer. How highly should we prize these Divine impressions and attractions in our own case, and how anxious should we be to cherish and improve them in others! But, alas! how often are they neglected, and checked by some sinful pursuit, or worldly object, until God in his all-wise and merciful providence interposes for our deliverance! Thus it was

with the humble subject of this narrative. After the promising beginning which has been mentioned, the vanities of youth, and the evil communications of those with whom she lived in service, led her away from God and religion, and, though preserved from gross sins, she lived some years in a careless and worldly manner.

"What a mercy it was, sir," said she, while mentioning this unhappy period, "that I was not cut off in the midst of it, without repentance and preparation for eternity! I bless God that he has been pleased to spare me, though he has brought me into the affliction in which you see me."

"Pray," said I, "what circumstances roused you to serious thought after you had thus been living in a negligent way?"

"Several things happened, sir, to bring about this blessed change in me. Mr. N—— came to be minister at H——, and his sermons went to my heart; and not to mine only, but to my poor aged mother's and to one of my sister's. Then, sir, not long after, this dear sister died, of the same disorder that I am now in—and *so peacefully, so happily*, that nobody could doubt of her having gone to heaven. Her death was greatly blessed to me; and I have often prayed that mine might be like it."

Perceiving that she began to be fatigued, I was unwilling to prolong the conversation at this time, farther than to ask her whether she had been much in the habit of *prayer*.

She replied that she had: "but now, sir," continued she, "that I am so weak, I am sometimes hardly able to use my voice for any length of time; *but I pray with my heart continually;* and when I lie awake at night, this is my great support and comfort. I think, too, at such times, of many texts of Scripture which I know by heart, and they are greatly blessed to my soul."

At her earnest request, I now prayed with her, and was much struck with the remarkable seriousness and fervor

with which she joined in my petitions. When I had ended, I urged upon her the duty of self-examination, and frequent application to the throne of grace for "repentance and remission of sins;" and was about to leave her, when the physician, who was attending her, came in.

After he had visited his patient, I inquired his opinion of her case, and was grieved to find that he entertained no expectation of her recovery—grieved not on her own account—for after what I had just witnessed, I could not but believe that she was ripening for heaven—but for her husband and her infant, who were about shortly to be deprived of so valuable a wife and mother; and for myself, who was likely so soon to lose a parishioner, whose example, were she spared, might prove eminently beneficial to all around her.

Though I could not but regret this melancholy prospect, yet joy and gratitude were the predominant feelings in my mind on leaving the cottage. I had entered it full of anxiety, doubt, and apprehension; fearing that I should only find fresh cause for lamenting the wretched state of those who are ignorant of themselves and of Jesus Christ, and who are wholly unprepared for a dying bed. I quitted it, not only relieved of this burden, but rejoicing in the awakened, humbled, spiritual frame of mind which its afflicted inhabitant discovered, and feeling inexpressibly gratified at so unexpected a result of my first parochial visit. Full of the interesting reflections which this occurrence had excited in my mind, I returned homewards. My thoughts were chiefly occupied with the love of God in the redemption of a ruined world; in the sufferings and death of his only begotten Son; with the love of that gracious Redeemer, who came into the world to save sinners; with the grace of that Holy Spirit who vouchsafes to apply this salvation effectually to the soul. While meditating on these sacred and inestimable truths, I could not help thinking how superior

was the happiness of my poor parishioner, in the midst of all her poverty, distress, and pain, to that of the wealthy, the prosperous, and the gay, who live "without God in the world;" who, satisfied with themselves and with worldly pleasures "for a season," neglect their immortal souls, and neither seek nor desire an interest in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. "Surely," thought I, "*one thing is indeed needful*, and M—— has chosen that good part which shall never be taken away from her." I am thankful also that I have thus early been honored with the opportunity of ministering to the edification and comfort of one, who will, I doubt not, prove an heir of salvation.

The reader will readily believe that I did not long delay a second visit to my poor parishioner. Although I was in a great measure satisfied as to her sincerity, and could not reasonably doubt that she was a child of God, I was anxious to ascertain the effect of my first visit, and to administer all the instruction and consolation which could be crowded within the apparently short remnant of her days. It was on the following Sabbath that I again directed my steps to the village. As I approached it, "the sound of the church-going bell" was collecting my little congregation. I could not, therefore, proceed to the cottage, till I had closed the morning service, and dismissed my little flock with that impressive and truly pastoral blessing, which it were to be wished might never be repeated without the fervor, or heard without the interest, which it so justly deserves. I then hastened to my sick parishioner. The door was opened to me by her husband, a remarkably fine, healthy-looking young man.

"How is your wife," said I, "to-day?"

"Very ill, sir."

"Worse than when I saw her on Thursday?"

"Rather weaker, sir."

'Shall I walk up stairs?"

"If you please, sir; she will be very glad to see you."

M—— appeared truly so. "I am sorry to hear that you feel weaker than when I saw you last."

"I do, indeed, sir; but it is the will of God, and it is my sincere desire that *his* will, and not mine, should be done."

"Whatever his will may be," said I, "be assured that it is the best."

"I know, sir," she replied, "that all things work together for good to them that love God."

"Do you think that you are of that happy number?"

"I cannot but hope so, sir. God knows that I love him. I am grieved that I have not served him as I ought, and that I cannot love him better; but I often think, sir, if it *should* please God to spare my life, and to raise me up again, how careful I will be not to offend him—how I will try to serve and please him."

"I trust you would; but since you have not done this, as you ought, before, why do you think you should do so hereafter?"

"Sir, I know that my heart is very weak and deceitful, and that I cannot do any thing good of myself; but I hope I have learnt much from this illness; I see the vanity of every thing but religion, and I think that, with God's assistance, I *should* lead a more Christian life."

"Have you thought much of what I said to you when I was here before?"

"I have thought of little else, sir."

"And do you believe that your repentance for your past sins is quite sincere?"

"I do indeed hope that it is."

"Do you feel any real sorrow on account of them, and any inward hatred and dread of sin?"

"I think I feel, sir, something of that broken and contrite heart which God will not despise."

Perceiving unusual symptoms of uneasiness about her, I asked her if she was in much pain.

"O, yes, sir; but what is my pain to that which my Saviour suffered upon the cross? He was for many hours upon the rack, and had none to comfort him; but I have deserved a great deal more than I suffer, and have many mercies."

Soon after this, her husband, who had till now been present, left the room, when I took the opportunity of asking M—— whether *he* thought and felt in any manner as she did upon religious subjects.

She shook her head at this question, and sighed as she answered, "I wish I could say he did, sir; but I cannot. My husband is a very sober, honest, well-behaved man, but I am sorry to say he knows but little about religion."

"How then," said I, "came you to think of marrying him?"

"Because I was a vain and foolish girl, sir; but I have been sorely chastised for it. I have known but very little happiness since I married. My husband, though kind and civil, has never liked to join with me in living as Christians should; and his family are all worldly people; and living so close to them, I have been *greatly tried.* I have earnestly desired to say, with Joshua, 'As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord;' but when I have asked my husband to hear me read the Bible, (for he is no scholar himself,) he would only tell me it was enough to go to church on Sundays. I used to tell my husband that we could not expect the blessing of God upon us, if we did not worship and serve him; and often when he has been going to lie down at night, without prayer, I have said to him, 'O, John, how can you go to rest without begging God's forgiveness and protection? Suppose your soul should this night be required of you! Do you think you should awake in heaven?' Sometimes, when I have spoken thus, sir, I could

prevail upon him to pray a few words; but at other times, he would bid me hold my tongue and go to sleep. O, sir, I cannot tell you what I have suffered on his account; and his family are all of the same way of thinking; but I hope you will be able to do them some good. All these things have made them not very kind to me; but I have much to be forgiven *myself*, sir, and I freely forgive *them*. Indeed, weak as I am, I would go down upon my knees to every one of them, if I could do them any good."

In the midst of this interesting conversation, we were interrupted by the arrival of two of her sisters, who had come from distant villages to see her. They were considerably older than my parishioner, and manifested an affectionate concern for her, which highly gratified me. It is one of the disadvantages of poverty, that it is in general apt to chill the current of the social and domestic feelings, and to produce a hardness and insensibility, which increase rather than diminish its other attendant evils. In the present case I was delighted to observe all the warmth of tenderness, and liveliness of sympathy, which more frequently distinguish those who are somewhat elevated above the lowest rank of life, called forth into exercise toward the afflicted subject of this narrative. After the first inquiries of these kind relatives were over, I was about to propose that we should unite in prayer, when my parishioner said that she had a particular favor to beg of me.

"What is that?" said I.

"You know, sir, Friday is Christmas-day, and I suppose you will administer the Lord's Supper. I have been looking forward a long time in the hope that I should be well enough to go to church, and join in that holy communion. The last time, sir, I ever saw Mr. P——, he talked to me a good while upon the subject, and gave me a book to read upon it. Though I had always a great desire to receive the Lord's Supper, I have been afraid of taking it unworthily.

I am indeed not worthy to pick up the crumbs under my Master's table; but Jesus said, 'Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, ye have no life in you.'"

"True," said I; "but do you think, that by merely receiving the Lord's Supper, you will have this life?"

"No, sir, I know that I must have a true faith in Christ."

"Yes, you must feed on him, '*in your heart*, by faith, with thanksgiving.'"

"That is my sincere desire, sir. *God knows how earnestly I have longed for an opportunity of going to the Lord's table.* You know, sir, Mr. P—— was taken ill just before the last time it was to be administered in our church, and I have been confined almost ever since; but now, if you think I am in a fit state to receive the supper, I should feel it to be the greatest blessing and comfort, if you would be so kind as to give it to me on Friday."

Upon this, I read to her several passages of Scripture, together with parts of the communion service which particularly mention the qualifications of acceptable communicants; and after conversing some time longer on the subject, and telling her that I should willingly comply with her request on Christmas-day,* I asked who would partake of it with her.

"I expect," said M——, "that my poor, dear mother will be here, if she can bear the journey; and she will, I am sure, be glad to join with me."

"And will not your *husband?*" said I, who was now returned to the sick room.

* It will be perceived, that this interesting and excellent Tract is from the pen of a devout Episcopalian; and in publishing it entire, it may perhaps be necessary to say, that the Publishing Committee would not be understood to express any opinion in relation to the practice of administering the Lord's Supper in private.

"O! how I wish he would come and embrace his Saviour," answered his wife. "Will you not, John?"

I reminded him that he must soon part with his dear wife; and that by joining her in the work of religion here, he would enjoy an earnest of a blessed union hereafter.

"I am in great trouble," he replied, "and scarcely know how to think of any thing."

"But," said I, "you should at least think of *religion*, for it is God only who can comfort you; and the illness of your wife is a call to you to turn to him. Jesus also invites you, now that you are in trouble, to come to him for rest."

He seemed to feel the truth of what I said; but partly from ignorance, and partly from that corruption which always opposes the turning of the heart to God, he held back from saying any thing more. How common, and yet how lamentable a case is this? Men neglect and refuse to make God their friend, and when, amidst the various changes of this mortal life, they fall into distress, they know not what to do, or whither to flee for support and comfort.

I closed this second visit by praying with this afflicted party assembled in the sick room. M—— joined in every petition with a degree of animation and fervor which I have seldom seen surpassed, and expressed her gratitude in a manner which left no room to doubt the reality of a Divine work in her heart. On leaving the room, I gave her a copy of "The Dairyman's Daughter," thinking that she might derive both instruction and comfort from a history which exhibits some circumstances very similar to those of her own case. I was, however, agreeably surprised to find that the benevolent physician, whom I had met on my first visit, had been beforehand with me in this present.

"I have contrived to read part of that little book, sir," said M——, "though not without difficulty. That young woman died of the disorder which I have. She was a true

Christian, sir, and I have been much comforted by many things that are related of her. God grant that I may be like her."

"I trust," said I, "that by the grace of God you *will* be like her, both living and dying. Fix your faith and love on the same gracious Saviour in whom she trusted, and you will enjoy similar peace and consolation, and the same blessed hope of eternal happiness! God bless you, M——, may he support, sanctify, and comfort you, while you remain here below, and make you daily better prepared for the heavenly world."

"God bless you, sir," was the reply, "for all your kind instructions and prayers. I cannot tell you how much they have comforted me."

About two days after my second visit to M——, I was told that some one from S——, the village in which she lived, wished to see me. As I had desired her to send for some little comforts which her humble circumstances could not afford, I took for granted that this was her messenger; but, instead of the person whom I expected on this errand, I was surprised to find that it was M——'s mother, whom my reader may recollect she told me she was hoping shortly to see. She was a decent looking old woman, with an air of peculiar meekness and gravity, and apparently bending more under the weight of trouble than of years.

"Pray rest yourself," said I, as she was attempting to rise. "You must be tired, after your long walk."

"A little, sir," was the reply; "but more distressed by my poor, dear daughter's illness."

"How is she to-day?"

"Very ill, indeed, sir; she cannot hold out long, I think."

"I fear not," said I; "but do not be too much distressed. Your daughter is, I trust, a real Christian, and preparing for a better world."

"Ah, sir, I trust she is. She is following her dear sister, who died about two years ago. Thank God, *she* was ready to go, and no doubt she is in heaven; and my poor dear M—— is very like her; but it is a great affliction to lose such good children in my old age."

"It is, indeed," I replied; "and I feel much for you. I have lost children, too, though not grown up; but although it is a heavy trial, the blessed hope of their being happy for ever in heaven is an unspeakable consolation. Now, as far as I am able to judge, I think your daughter is a true believer in Jesus Christ, and interested in his salvation."

"It is a great comfort to me to hear you say so, sir. Indeed, I do think so myself. She was always inclined to religion from a child; but she has attended more to it within the last two or three years than ever."

"She appears to me," said I, "to be in a very hopeful frame of mind. I cannot look into her heart; but if she is sincere in her professions, I cannot but think that she is in the way to heaven."

"Why, to be sure, sir, as you say, we cannot look into the heart; but it is of no use to pretend to religion, if we are not sincere in it; and so I tell M——, and indeed I think she *is* sincere."

"Pray, when did you come to see your daughter?"

"Last Sunday, sir, just after you left her. I have been in a great deal of trouble about walking over on the *Sabbath;* but I trust the Lord will forgive me, if I did wrong. I did not hear till then that she was so ill, and put off coming to see her as long as possible, for the journey is almost too much for me at my age; but I was afraid I should hardly see her alive, if I did not set off directly, or be stopped next day by the weather, this winter time; and all the way I came, my thoughts were taken up with God and heavenly things."

"Indeed," said I, much struck with the tenderness of

conscience displayed by the poor old woman, "I think this is a case in which God would have 'mercy and not sacrifice.' You know your Saviour graciously allows us to perform acts of necessity, mercy, and charity, on the Sabbath; and I cannot suppose he was offended by your journey to see your poor sick daughter, especially as you seem to have a sincere desire to serve and please him. Pray, have you long thought so seriously upon religion?"

"Not so long, sir, as I could wish I had. The former part of my life was too much taken up with the cares of the world, and the labor of bringing up a large family; but I had much affliction of late years, and it has pleased God to teach me many things concerning his Son Jesus Christ and the salvation of my soul; and I bless his holy name for giving me the opportunity, in my old age, of attending to these things."

The good old woman had now rested herself after the fatigue of her walk, and, after a little farther refreshment, prepared to return to her daughter's cottage. I could not help regarding her with a peculiar pleasure. Truly, "the hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness."

On the Friday following the preceding conversation with M——'s mother, being Christmas-day, I repaired to my village church to celebrate that truly joyful festival; and to unite with it the commemoration of the death of that gracious Saviour, at the recollection of whose birth we had previously rejoiced. Although the morning was unusually cold, the beams of the winter's sun were bright and cheering, and seemed to hail the return of that hallowed season, in which, with so much propriety, we are invited to express our gratitude for the dawning of that "Day-spring from on high," which can alone "guide our feet into the way of peace." My little flock assembled in the house of God;

and while our thanksgivings and prayers ascended, I trust with acceptance, before the throne of grace, the hearts of some at least among us were, I hope, warmed by our meditations on the angelic anthem which so clearly and beautifully describes the blessed effects of the Saviour's birth: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The table of the Lord's Supper was next approached, where, in unison with multitudes of our brethren throughout the world, we again joined in that exalted hymn; and together with our praises for the finished work of redemption, offered up our supplication to Him that sitteth "at the right hand of God the Father," to "have mercy upon us," and to "receive our prayers." The delightful service of the sanctuary being thus ended, I proceeded to the cottage of my poor, sick friend; and, as it was very near the church, the clerk followed with the sacred provisions of which we had just partaken at the public communion.

I found M—— anxiously expecting us. Her little chamber had been made as neat as possible for the occasion; and in one corner of it a napkin was spread on a table, at which we were to commemorate the last supper of our Lord. There is something peculiarly solemn and affecting in every celebration of this holy institution; but the interest of the service has always appeared to me to be greatly heightened, when administered to the sick and dying Christian. Much as these sacred mysteries have been abused by superstition, and vainly relied on by ignorance and self-righteousness, there does seem to me to be an eminent propriety in exhibiting to the departing believer, "Jesus Christ, and him crucified," in the evident and significant symbols of the Lord's Supper. The weakness of nature, oppressed by mortal disease and pain, then especially requires the assistance of these outward memorials; and although the appetite for "the bread which perisheth," may now be nearly extinct;

yet the desire for that "which came down from heaven," and "endureth unto everlasting life," which "the Son of man giveth," may perhaps be more than ever lively and sincere. The Christian, therefore, entering on the last stage of his earthly pilgrimage, is generally and justly anxious to be supplied with that sacred provision, which is to cheer his fainting spirits, and to support his weary steps in the dark valley of the shadow of death. With this blessed table spread before him, and with the presence and guidance of the great Master of the feast, he fears no evil; his rod and his staff, they comfort him.

It was under these impressions that I met and found my poor parishioner. To my inquiries as to her bodily health, she replied that she felt herself rapidly declining; but that she was much more peaceful and happy in her mind than she had ever been before.

"I have been longing, sir, for this day to come; for I can truly say with my Saviour himself, 'With desire have I desired to eat this passover before I suffer.'"

"I rejoice to hear you say so," said I; "and now let us pray that Christ may be present with us, by his Spirit, to bless us."

"I have been praying for this, sir, before you came, and I do hope and believe that he will be with us, for I come to him as a poor perishing sinner, and put my whole trust in him for pardon and salvation. I have been thinking this morning of his love in coming down from heaven to save us; and how much he suffered, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life; and now I rejoice in this opportunity of receiving the memorials of his broken body and his shed blood. Ah, sir, you see my poor husband does not take it with me; but I earnestly hope that when I am gone, God will give him grace to become a true Christian."

We now prepared for our affecting service. M——, her poor aged mother, myself, and my clerk, were alone

present. M—— desired to be lifted up in the bed, that she might join in the communion with as much solemnity and attention as her extreme weakness would allow. She was accordingly supported as well as circumstances admitted; and emaciated as she was, the delusive color in her cheeks, and the brilliancy of her eyes, animated partly by the fatal fire of disease, and partly by the more serene fervor of devotion, rendered her an interesting object of contemplation. We began our supplications to him who corrects those whom he loves, and chastises every one whom he receives, that he would have mercy upon her who was now visited by his hand, grant that she might take her sickness patiently, and recover her bodily health, (if such were his gracious will,) and that whensoever her soul should depart from the body, it might be without spot presented unto Him, through Jesus Christ our Lord. We read the consoling admonition of the apostle, in the twelfth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, and the encouraging and inestimable declaration of our Saviour, in the fifth chapter of St. John's gospel: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." I shall not soon forget the devout and animated look of gratitude which, with clasped hands, M—— directed towards heaven, while I pronounced these delightful words. I must not, however, detain the reader, by detailing every step in the progress of this interesting service; suffice it to say, that my poor friend joined with the most marked and lively devotion in every part of it, in the humbling confession of sin, in the gracious declarations and promises of forgiveness through faith in the atoning blood of our Redeemer, and in the glowing ascriptions of praise to Almighty God "for his unspeakable gift." The solemn and heartfelt tone in which she confirmed her hope of eternal salvation, through the sacrifice of Christ upon the

cross, as she received the visible emblems of his body and blood, and the tokens of his dying love, was peculiarly impressive; and satisfied me that she was *indeed* "feeding on *Him* in her heart, by faith, with thanksgiving." Nor was the deportment of her aged mother less striking and edifying. There was in her a mingled air of grief, submission, and devout thankfulness, which encouraged the best hopes of her real piety, and greatly added to the solemnity and interest of this affecting scene. For myself, while my heart was lifted up to Him whose death we had been commemorating, in gratitude and praise for his exceeding great love in thus dying for us, and in instituting this holy supper, and in prayer for the sanctified improvement of our late participation in them, I could truly say, "Lord, it is good for me to be here."

So thought my dying parishioner also; for, as I was preparing to take my leave of her, she suddenly observed, "O, this is more than I ever felt before."

Fearing that her exertion in sitting up, during the administration of the ordinance, had produced some additional uneasiness, I said to her, "Is it *pain* that you feel?"

"Oh, no, sir; comfort, happiness, such as I never before experienced. My Saviour is indeed with me. He is mine, and I am his. I cannot doubt that he will forgive and save me. He knows that I love him *above all things*, and desire to be with him; but I am willing to wait, and to suffer whatever he pleases to put upon me; and when the holy will of God is done, I hope to dwell with him for ever in heaven. I am truly thankful, sir, for this blessed ordinance, and have now but little more to do or wish for as to this world; but I hope you will come and see me as long as I remain here—that will be a great comfort to me. Do not grieve, my dear mother," (perceiving her venerable parent in tears,) "it is the will of God, you know, that my journey should be so short; but blessed be his holy name, I feel that I am in the

way to heaven, and there, I hope, you will shortly meet me. When Mr. N—— preached poor Mr. P——'s funeral sermon, sir," addressing herself to me, "he told us that he was gone to see the King of glory; and I trust I am going to see him also."

"I trust you are," said I, "and rejoice to find that you are able to look forward with so delightful a hope. We have prayed for this; and now I only hope and pray, that God will continue to be with you; that he will sanctify you in body, soul, and spirit, and preserve you to his heavenly kingdom."

Under the influence of these feelings, I left the cottage of my poor, sick friend, and returned home with an increased conviction of the infinite value of the Gospel, and still more firmly persuaded, by all that I had just seen and felt, that it is the grand remedy for all the evils under which mankind labor; that it can give peace to the troubled conscience, pardon to the guilty, rest to the weary, comfort to the afflicted, health to the sick, and even life to the dead; that it is, in short, what the apostle well describes it, "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

But I must begin to draw towards the close of my village narrative. Two days after that on which I made the visit last described, I again saw M——. During this short interval her disease had made a rapid progress, and I plainly perceived that it would soon remove her from a world of pain and sorrow. Although considerably weaker, and suffering more acutely than before, she expressed the same humble, yet joyful hope of acceptance through her Redeemer, and her earnest desire "to depart and be with Christ."

"But I cannot help thinking, sir," said she, "that I must *suffer* more yet, before I can be fit for heaven."

"You do not suppose," I replied, fearing at the moment

that she might be imagining her suffering to be in some manner meritorious, "that the pain which you endure can purchase heaven, or in itself prove profitable to you?"

"Oh no, sir; God forbid that I should trust in any thing for salvation but the merits of my Saviour. I only meant, that as I was a very sinful creature, and deserved to be afflicted, and had found the benefit of pain and suffering, in weaning me from a vain and worldly life, I should probably have to go through more than I have yet suffered; but perhaps I do not express myself as I ought."

"There is truth," said I, "in what you say. You know the Scripture says, that Christ was made perfect through suffering; and we may be well contented to be like him, if we may dwell with him for ever in glory. Every member of Christ is in a measure conformed or made like to him in suffering; but his alone was meritorious—ours is intended to humble and purify us, and God knows best how much, and what kind of suffering is most suited to sanctify us. He will not lay upon *you* more than is good for you, or more than he will enable you to bear. Resign yourself to him, and be assured that he will support you in every trial, and make you more than conqueror, through him who hath loved us."

"I trust he will, and do not doubt his goodness, though I am so sinful and unworthy a creature." After a short pause, M—— continued, "I am glad to see and hear you again, sir, for my poor mother was obliged to leave me yesterday, and the neighbors who are kind enough to come and see me, talk almost entirely about worldly things; and I tell them I have done with the world, and only wish to think and speak of what concerns the salvation of my soul. Indeed, I have but one thing which gives me much anxiety; and that is about my poor, dear babe. I used to think how happy I should be when I had him; but I have never had health to enjoy him, and now I must very soon be parted

from him for ever as to this world! Poor, dear little fellow, I can resign him cheerfully sometimes, when he is away from me; but as soon as I *see* him, it goes to my very heart."

"I do not doubt it," replied I. "It is, indeed, a painful task for you to leave him so young, in a world like this, but his father and grandmother will no doubt be kind to him, and take all the care of him in their power, and he shall not want a friend. Entrust him in the hands of your heavenly Father. *He* will take him up, though every other friend should forsake him, and will not suffer him to want. 'I have been young,' said the Psalmist, 'and now am old; yet never saw I the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.' Hope in God, that as he has blessed *you*, so he will also bless your *offspring*."

"This is my earnest prayer, sir; and I hope God will enable me to commit myself, my child, and my husband, into his hands, to do as it seemeth good in his sight."

My poor friend was so much exhausted by her exertion during this conversation, although it was comparatively a short one, that I was obliged to close my visit more quickly than usual, which I did by reading a few passages of Scripture suited to her state, and commending her in prayer to the mercy and grace of God our Saviour. As I was leaving the room, she repeated her earnest request, that I would remember her in my prayers, and that I would visit her during the short remainder of her earthly pilgrimage; adding, with a sort of prophetic feeling, that if she should not live to see me again, she trusted that, through the merits of that blessed Redeemer in whom we believed, we should meet in heaven. See her, indeed, again, I did; but I regret to say, that it was only during the state of extreme weakness and insensibility into which she suddenly fell a few days after my last interview with her. I was prevented by a heavy fall of snow from repeating my visit till the follow-

ing Sabbath; when, on reaching the cottage, I learned, to my disappointment and sorrow, that her powers both of mind and body were nearly exhausted, and that she was wholly unconscious of what passed around her. On entering her room, I found that it was indeed so; and in contemplating the decay of the outward form, I could only rejoice that I had witnessed the renewal of "the inward man" day by day; that although the "earthly house of her tabernacle" was nearly dissolved, there was such solid ground for believing that she would shortly inhabit "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

The mother of M—— not having been able, from the fatigue of her former journey, to return to her, I could collect but little from those who attended her, of the frame of her mind during the short interval of sensibility which followed my preceding visit. The little, however, which I did gather, was pleasing and satisfactory. I found that, being aware of her approaching end, she called for her husband and other relatives who were near, and took a solemn and affectionate farewell of them, declaring, in humble yet forcible terms, her reconciliation with God, and her hope of salvation through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and earnestly exhorting and beseeching them to flee for refuge to the same gracious and all-sufficient Saviour. She then desired to see her little boy, and commended him to the protection and blessing of Almighty God, charging her husband to bring him up in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" and having again urged them to attend to the things which belong to their peace, while the day of life lasted, she said that she had nothing farther to do in this world, but humbly to wait for the time of her departure; adding, that she prayed to be entirely patient and resigned, and hoped that I should see her once more to assist her in preparing for her last trying conflict. This, however, I was prevented by her unconscious state from doing, otherwise than by my prayers in

her behalf. After I left her, she revived only for a few minutes, during which she faintly but delightfully repeated her faith and hope of salvation; and soon afterwards slept peacefully in the Lord; leaving on the minds of those who witnessed her departure, a lively impression of her extraordinary piety and heavenly happiness.

The funeral of my poor parishioner took place on the following Sabbath. The journey was too great to allow of her aged parent being present; but it was attended by a crowd of relatives, who testified, by their grief and regret, the affection with which they loved her, and the sincerity with which they mourned her loss. A village funeral is always solemn and affecting. The absence of that ostentatious and misplaced pomp, which accompanies the interment of the great, tends at once to soften and impress the mind; and where, as in the present instance, a well-grounded hope can be entertained of the happiness of the departed, the contrast between the consignment of the poor remains to the lowly grave, and the recollection of the heavenly glory to which the emancipated spirit has been exalted, is productive of feelings and reflections of the most touching, yet animating nature. I endeavored to improve this solemn and instructive occasion, from the pulpit; and trust, that our meditations on the frailty of man, and the inestimable value of that word of the Lord which endureth for ever, and which, by the Gospel, is preached unto us, were not altogether in vain.

I might detain the reader yet longer by adding some of the reflections which this subject has suggested to me. But I will only repeat that the preceding memorial affords another testimony to the inestimable value of the Gospel, which thus evidently triumphed over poverty, disease, and death itself; and proved the source of pardon, peace, holiness, hope, and joy, to one who possessed but little of this world's goods, and who, but for this heavenly treasure, would have

been poor indeed! The example, too, of this interesting young woman, is not only an additional evidence of the capability of those who are in the lowest ranks of life, to understand and receive the great doctrines of the Gospel, but of the nature and efficacy of Divine teaching. My departed parishioner was but little acquainted with human forms and professions of religion. She was taught and drawn of God, and received, with the simplicity of faith and love, that ingrafted word which was able to save her soul.

While, therefore, I would particularly hold out the example of her piety, as an encouragement to my clerical brethren to persevere in their parochial labors, and to hope for similar proofs of the power and reality of religion among the poor of their flocks, let us, whether rich or poor, whether old or young, diligently inquire as to the nature of our own knowledge, faith, and practice. Let us examine the foundation upon which we are building our hopes of salvation, remembering that the hour cannot be far distant which will try its stability to the utmost. I know not that I can express a better wish, than that we may all possess the deep humility, firm faith, animated hope, and heavenly temper, which I beheld, and have thus imperfectly described, in "the Cottager's Wife;" who, to adopt Cowper's beautiful lines,

> "Just knew, and knew no more, her Bible true—
> A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew;
> And in that Charter read, with sparkling eyes,
> Her title to a treasure in the skies.
> Oh, blessed effect of penury and want,
> The seed sown there, how vigorous the plant!
> The light they walk by, kindled from above,
> Shows them the shortest way to life and love.
> They, strangers to the controversial field,
> Where Deists, always foiled, yet scorn to yield,
> And never checked by what impedes the wise,
> *Believe, rush forward, and possess the prize.*"

No. 64.

CONVERSATION WITH AN INFIDEL.

Every one knows what a mixed multitude and what a variety of characters are usually assembled in the cabin of a western steam-boat. There are to be met individuals of almost every nation, speaking their own language, and cherishing their own peculiar sentiments and predilections, respecting philosophy, religion, morals, and politics. Every man thinks and speaks without restraint, as though the sole arbiter of his thoughts, and is nearly sure to have some votaries to his opinions, whatever they may be.

The following discussion, in the cabin of the Red Rover, a steam-boat in the trade of the Upper Mississippi, conveyed so much pleasure and instruction to the writer, that he is induced to record it for the entertainment of others. The disputants were both veteran residents in the country of the Upper Mississippi, and both men of high standing and talents.

Dr. G——, reclining upon the richly embellished side-board, while a group of interested listeners were soon attracted to the spot, said to the other, pointing at the same time to *a Bible with a pack of cards lying upon it*, "You see, Mr. D——, this position of the *cards* and the *Bible* seems to indicate which is usually uppermost in the mind. I beg leave to invert the order;" and extending his hand, he placed the Bible *upon* the cards, observing, "*That* is the order which best corresponds with the intrinsic nature and value of things."

Mr. D——, raising his head among the company, and directing a fixed eye upon the speaker, responded, "You are doubtless aware, sir, that some of us think differently upon these matters."

"Yes," answered Dr. G——, "perhaps you better understand the cards than the Bible, as you have been a more diligent student of the one than the other."

The conversation now began to arouse the feelings of the

parties, and to attract the excited attention of nearly all in the cabin.

Mr. D——. "I have deliberately made up my mind that the Bible is false, and totally unworthy of human credit and confidence."

Dr. G——. "This, sir, strikes me as a wholesale and sweeping remark. Assertion, you must be aware, is not argument. Permit me to ask, what particular part of the Bible you condemn as false—point me, if you please, to the chapter and verse. Or, do you pretend to take the broad position, that it contains nothing which is true? I can point you, sir, to one short sentence, the truth of which is confirmed by our daily observation and the universal experience of mankind. Here it is: 'It is appointed unto men once to die.'"

Mr. D——. "I believe that many parts of the Bible are of an immoral tendency; that the light of nature, reason, and philosophy, is a sufficient guide; and that by the help of these, man is capable of devising for himself a more perfect rule of duty than the Bible furnishes."

Dr. G——. "Truly, sir, it fills me with astonishment, that you, or any other thinking person, could ever adopt an opinion so utterly contradictory to all history, truth, and experience. I will venture to affirm, upon the authority of all past history, that the practical system of moral ethics contained in the Old and New Testaments vastly surpasses, in reach of thought, sublimity of conception, practical simplicity of wisdom, and influential moral efficiency, all the systems of human philosophy and ethics that have sprung into being, flourished, and expired, since the world began. How many of those systems are now known? Long since were they exploded, covering with confusion their respective authors, as among those who, 'thinking themselves wise, became fools.' Behold Christianity, through ages of darkness, and under all the vicissitudes of time, the convulsions and the combined resistances of human governments, standing firm against the attack of every foe, like a pillar of granite against the waves of the ocean.

"Trace its influence along the successive periods of history, profane and sacred, in giving existence, form, and permanency to some of the most refined, useful, and wholesome institutions of civilized man; in eradicating some of

the most bloody rites of paganism, and some of the most inveterate and pernicious customs and usages of barbarous nations. Why does the wretched monster upon the shores of the Ganges cast the infant of her breast to the jaws of the voracious crocodile? Or why does the widow in India cast herself in frantic agony upon the funeral pile that consumes the lifeless body of her husband? Why have such customs prevailed unchecked for centuries, under all the light of nature and reason, and the philosophy and religion of the Brahmins?

"Has the boasted light of nature and reason ever delivered man from the bondage of his guilty passions, his most foul and degrading vices, his ignorance and his superstition? Show me, from facts, that nature and reason, unaided by revelation, have effectually saved man from his vices, and held him firm to his obligations and duties, and furnished him with a better rule of conduct than the Bible, and I yield the argument.

"Again, sir, as we appear to be honored with the ear of the company, allow me to direct your attention to the influence of the Christian religion, in originating and fostering those useful arts which give a true value and embellishment to human life, and those institutions of education, and social order, and morality, which are the only solid basis and firm bulwark of civil government. Do I claim too much for Christianity when I make it the most powerful auxiliary to civil government that ever has existed? The very champions of infidelity, in England and France, have conceded as much. See it also in the more private walks of life, putting forth a benign hand to comfort the orphan, the widow, and the fatherless. Contrast this with a single custom which, among some uncivilized nations, permits children to inflict a death of violence upon their aged parents, that they may escape the trouble of their maintenance. Christianity, I am bold to affirm, is the very life and soul of all those works of philanthropy which sceptics and infidels sometimes lavishly admire and extol. They admire the fruit, but wish to blast or disparage the noble, time-worn, weather-beaten *tree* that has yielded the harvest. Nay, while they sometimes traduce and deface the true mother trunk, they attribute by stealth the same fruits to 'briars and thorns.' Often do professed infidels, in their treatment of Christianity, imi-

tate the viper in the fable; they sting the maternal bosom that has warmed them into life.

"I point you, sir, to its deeds of philanthropy, in erecting institutions for the insane, the blind, the deaf, the poor; and in gathering under the fostering wing of its protection and care all those wretched outcasts from human society, and countless objects of commiseration, which the cold and sparing charity of the world often spurns from its bounty with heartless contempt. Who can count the number of its trophies, in reforming the most baneful customs and crimes of mankind? Estimate the drunkards, the profligates, the gamblers, the profane swearers, the Sabbath-breakers, the thieves, and the law-breakers of every name, nation, and complexion, and shade of guilt, whom Christian motives have finally reached and effectually reclaimed. Are not these good fruits? And are they not visible and abundant wherever the Christian religion, in a nation, a community, or an individual, exerts its most powerful influence? My appeal is to facts. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.'

"But, aside from all this array of external proof, I am willing to attest the superiority of the Christian system by one of its own internal, unrivalled precepts, namely, '*Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.*' Not all the philosophers of antiquity, not the seven wise men of Greece, not Socrates, Plato, or Seneca ever advanced a maxim of practical wisdom equal to this. Mankind have only to reduce this precept to universal practice, and the most perfect condition of the human family is at once attained. Who can once begin to act upon this maxim without feeling the most exalted happiness in his own bosom, and diffusing the same among his neighbors and friends?"

Mr. D——, after listening to these accumulated arguments, with few and feeble efforts to reply or refute them, yet giving many signs of feeling stung with the chagrin of defeat, upon a sudden, and unexpectedly to many of the hearers, assumed the bold position that *man is annihilated at death*—that the Bible doctrine of a future existence and the immortality of man is a fiction of the imagination, and inconsistent with all sound philosophy.

To doubt and cavil at every truth which can claim antiquity and the general assent of mankind, appears to some

a singular proof of a bold and gifted mind: and here was another sweeping and popular declaration.

"You are addressing one, sir," mildly replied Dr. G——, "who can well sympathize with you in your professed belief upon this most solemn and interesting subject of revelation. I have long labored to convince myself that the annihilation of man at death was true. But I find incontestible proof of the immortality of man from the structure and attributes of my own mind. Man need not go beyond himself for overwhelming conviction upon this point. Why do we possess capacities and powers which, so far from reaching perfection in the present life, scarcely begin to be improved and unfolded? Will any one pretend that even the mind of Sir Isaac Newton reached the limit of its powers in time? How much less, then, the great mass of minds that comparatively lie buried in ignorance? Was the mysterious fire of intellect lit up in the human breast to be smothered or burn dimly a few brief years upon earth, and after that be extinguished in the night of eternal annihilation? Who can believe this? Would the Creator thus cast mockery upon the noblest of his own works? Does not the human mind show, in its very structure and faculties, an adaptation to a far more perfect and exalted state of being? Why is every human mind often exercised with the most ardent and irrepressible desires after something beyond its present gratification—desires and wants, which nothing in the wide range of created objects can satisfy? Why has the mind of man a moral and intellectual constitution for a more exalted and enduring state of being, if that state is never to be attained? Why does the monitory voice of the human conscience point man to a future state of retribution, if no such state will take place? The very apprehension of future punishment, often and keenly felt by the guilty, as well as the pleasing anticipations of future bliss known only to the righteous, are standing, living proofs of man's immortality. By the common laws of analogy and philosophy, the mind contains in itself the evidences of its own immortality. So reasoned Socrates, the prince of ancient philosophers.

"Look for a moment at one case of analogy. It is well known that the *caterpillar* spends its existence in three different states. It comes into being a disgusting reptile;

burrows in the crevices of rocks, or mingles with the dust; feeds upon the most noxious vegetables, even the deadly nightshade, and conveys a chill of horror by the touch to almost every human being. But mark, it is not destined to finish its being in this condition. After a short period it assumes, by a mysterious law of its nature, the form of a *chrysalis*. This state seems a near approximation to the total annihilation of the principle of life. But this mysterious repose is soon broken by the animal's emerging into a state of being—into an element and a physical form, at the greatest imaginable remove from each preceding mode of existence. It is now seen sporting in the air, in the form of a *butterfly*, and has been fitly called by naturalists the 'king of insects.' Its former tenement is laid aside, and returns to dust, but the same unextinguished and unchanged principle of life accompanies the animal to another form. *Before*, it was only disgusting to the sight; *now*, its attire is painted with the most gaudy and beautiful colors in nature. *Before*, it crawled upon the earth, to be assiduously shunned by every passer; *now*, it basks in the sunbeam, borrowing its hues, and plays its endless gambols in high air, the delight of every child. *Before*, it was nourished by poison; *now*, it sips at every flower, and is nourished by nectar. How beautifully does this simple, but mysterious process of nature illustrate man's immortality! The philosopher can as easily explain how man may pass into a state of immortality, as he can explain how a butterfly is produced from a chrysalis. Here are as great mysteries as attend the Scripture doctrine of the final resurrection and immortality of man; nor let the sceptic deny the mysteries of the one until he can fully solve those of the other.

"Indeed, the common mysterious law of vegetation, by which a new scion or germ is produced from its parent seed—the one rising into the light of the sun with renovated verdure and beauty, while the other decays in the earth, affords analogical proof of the immortality of man equally forcible, and is beautifully appealed to by an inspired writer for that purpose."

Mr. D—— now seemed disposed to close the colloquy—to which all present had listened with the most eager and intense interest—by addressing his antagonist in these words: "You, sir, may take pleasure in such views and

opinions upon these matters, but for myself *I do not like to think of them.*"

Dr. G——. "Instead of wholly abandoning a subject, sir, which I conceive to be so nearly connected with your present and future peace, and upon which your own good sense and abilities qualify you to form correct and peace-inspiring opinions, let me, in the most sincere friendship, counsel you to *reëxamine* most assiduously and carefully the ground upon which you stand, and the supposed arguments by which your belief is supported. This Bible teaches that man is endowed with an intelligent, immortal mind; that he is a sinner, and obnoxious to punishment, because the '*law is holy, just, and good,*' and worthy to be eternally maintained. The Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, the only begotten Son of God, has made full and adequate atonement for sin, and redeemed from the penalty of the law all who truly repent and believe upon his name, and will crown them with 'glory and immortality,' while the wicked or the unbelieving and the impenitent will eternally 'eat of the fruit of their own doings.'

"Now, sir, in this belief of a divine, almighty, interceding, pardoning Saviour, 'exalted at the right hand of God, to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins,' is to be found the only remedy for all the maladies of a fallen being. And, above all, as I firmly believe, it is the only sure antidote to that scepticism and infidelity which is the prolific mother of all vice and crime—that infidelity which, to morals, is as the autumnal fires that sweep over our vast prairies; to the noble tree of liberty, as a worm at the root; to her fair temple, as a mine beneath her walls, or a magazine stealthily concealed in her vaults, and waiting only for the universal popular consent, and the match, madly applied, to scatter her magnificent columns to the four winds. Is the infidel, then, a patriot? When he puts a violent hand to the ark of Christianity, or attempts to weaken the foundations of virtue, morality, intelligence, and religion, which Washington pronounced the only firm '*pillars of a republic,*' he aims a deadly thrust at the heart of his country. If this be not corroborated by the history of every civil government, let it pass for an idle figure of speech. Look at France with her rivers of blood, when it was inscribed upon her temples of religion, 'There is no God.'

"Permit me, sir, once more to commend to you and all who hear my voice, that blessed Saviour of the world, 'whose blood' crimsoned the cross for lost man, and 'cleanseth from all sin.' Here is a balm for every wound—the only true refuge from those corroding doubts and fears that haunt the unbeliever. This refuge is, to the tempest-tost infidel, like a balmy island of repose and safety to the mariner who has only escaped with his life from being ingulfed. It is like the summit of a mountain gilded with sunshine, while darkness and tempest lower beneath. It is the sweet shield and refuge of the 'Prince of Peace, the mighty God, the everlasting Father,' from that coming storm which shall 'devour the adversaries.' It is a citadel, which, not even the 'last enemy, Death,' can demolish. Here is a belief which will secure to all its sincere votaries an 'abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of God, to go no more out for ever.'"

Whether Mr. D—— will comply with this friendly counsel, until he shall reach that solemn crisis, called by another "an honest hour," the bed of death, it remains for time to show. That the conversation had shaken the minds of many sceptics, and produced a highly solemn and salutary impression upon all present, was too manifest to be doubted. Do the friends of divine revelation and their country witness in this characteristic promptness and firmness of Dr. G—— an example worthy of imitation? *Let them*—according to their ability and opportunities—*go and do likewise!*

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No. 65.

AN AMIABLE YOUTH

FALLING SHORT OF HEAVEN.

"ONE THING THOU LACKEST."—MARK 10 : 21.

THE history of this young man is given by three of the evangelists, Matt. 19, Mark 10, Luke 18, in nearly the same words. It is, therefore, doubtless worthy of our marked attention.

This youth possessed many things, and yet was deficient in one. He was rich; he was possessed of power, for Luke calls him "a ruler;" he was remarkable for his morality. Few young men in our day could compare with him in this respect; for when our Saviour, to try him, mentioned several of the commandments of the second table, in which our duty to our fellow-men is enjoined, this young man was able to say, "All these have I kept from my youth up." And our Lord did not deny the truth of his assertion; yea, he admitted it; for Mark says, "Then Jesus beholding him, loved him." He was pleased with the purity and blamelessness of his external conduct. Christ, as a man, possessed the common innocent affections of human nature; and he loved this young man on account of his freedom from the vices to which many are addicted.

In the sequel, however, it will appear that this youth had no proper knowledge of the state of his own heart. His obedience was only like that of Paul when a Pharisee, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."

But he was not only moral, but *respectful*. Christ was treated by most of the Jewish rulers with great contempt; so that it was contemptuously asked, on a certain occasion,

"Have any of the rulers believed on him?" This young ruler, however, was not ashamed to accost him in the most respectful manner; for he came, regardless of the sneers of his compeers, and kneeling, said, "Good Master." Christ reproved him for using the epithet "good," as being a title which properly belonged to God only; and, evidently, the young man, though he thought Christ was an inspired teacher, did not know that he was a divine person.

And in addition to all, this amiable youth was *a serious inquirer*. The question which he asked was the most important that he could ask, or that any man ever asked: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" He was convinced that something was still needful, but he knew not what. He had heard of the teachings of Christ, and he was impelled by the serious impressions on his mind, to break through every difficulty, and to inquire of the Master; believing that he could tell him what to do to secure this object of infinite value.

And, evidently, he was confident that he was *willing to do whatever should be prescribed*. Oh, deceitful heart; how little did he know of its true state! But Jesus knew, and in a moment brought him to a fair test. He knew that, notwithstanding all his fair professions, amiable character, and courteous demeanor, he was an idolater in his heart, and worshipped mammon with supreme affection. He therefore said, Go sell all that thou hast and distribute to the poor, and come, follow me; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.

O what a test for a lover of riches! See, the young man's countenance changes; he remains silent. His heart is undergoing an evident conflict. Heaven and earth, with all their charms, are before him. For a moment, perhaps, he hesitates; for he sincerely wishes to possess eternal life—but, O hard condition! to give away all his riches, to which his heart was wedded! No, no; he cannot do it.

See, he turns his back on the Saviour; he turns his back on all the treasures of heaven. He goes away sorrow-

ful indeed, very sorrowful to lose the opportunity of securing eternal happiness, but deliberately resolved not to relinquish his hold of this world. He will have his "good things" in this life, whatever may become of him in the next. Here is a picture of the true state of thousands—of thousands of well-instructed, moral, and amiable youth!

But was not this a hard test? Was it not more than is required of others? Not at all. All may not, in fact, be put to this test; but every true disciple has already passed this ordeal, and has renounced the world as a portion—as an object of supreme affection. And every true Christian, however much of this world he may possess, would instantly resign it all at the command of Christ. It is the characteristic of every genuine disciple, that, for the sake of Christ, he has been made willing to forsake father, mother, wife and children, house and lands, yea, life itself.

It is true, this test, if made practical in our churches, would detect the hypocrisy of a multitude of professors; or rather, their want of supreme love to Christ is already but too evident, from the ardor with which they pursue the world, and from their unwillingness to part with even a small portion of their wealth, to promote the cause of Christ.

This young man possessed many excellent qualities and advantages, and lacked but ONE THING; yet that was the main thing—the one thing needful: a heart to love God supremely—a heart to prefer heavenly treasures to earthly riches. Though his character and conduct were so correct and amiable, yet his heart was not right in the sight of God. He went away sorrowful.

But did he ever come back with a better mind? We do not read that he ever did. His sorrow was not that of true repentance—repentance unto life, but "the sorrow of the world which worketh death;" a sorrow which probably he has bitterly felt for eighteen centuries, and which will never cease.

What good can his riches do him now? They only furnish fuel to the flame in which he is tormented. Let

young men look at this. Let the lovers of riches look at this.

Although neither the future course of this rich young man in this world, nor his final destiny, is given in the Scriptures, the probability is, that, having turned his back on the Saviour and on the heavenly inheritance, he relinquished all thought about his salvation from this time, and abandoned himself to the enjoyment of his idolized riches. Men who have for a time been under serious concern about the salvation of their souls, and afterwards turn back to the world, because they find the terms of salvation too difficult, commonly become more careless and more hardened than others. "Their last state is worse than the first."

But though we have no record of the end of this rich young man, we have, from the lips of the Saviour himself, an affecting account of the end of another rich man, who lived in splendor and pleasure on earth, but neglected piety and charity. The transition, in his case, from a sumptuous table, and from being clothed in purple and fine linen, to the torments of hell, is as great as the imagination can conceive. When he began to experience the keen anguish of future misery, O how bitter was his cry! "Send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." But it was too late to pray. He had enjoyed his good things here, and nothing but torment awaited him in the world of woe. Let the rich and respectable fear, then, lest they receive their portion in this world. Better to be poor as Lazarus here, if, when we die, angels shall convoy our departing spirits to the paradise of God.

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No. 66.

ON

SPIRITUAL DECLENSION.

BY RT. REV. CHARLES P. M'ILVAINE, D. D.

"And unto the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Rev. 3 : 14–18, 22.

Could language have described more forcibly a state of spiritual declension? Could words have told more impressively the abhorrence and loathing with which such a condition is beheld of God?

But was it only for the unhappy Laodiceans that these words were written? Can we discover, in these days of

light and privileges, no churches, no professed Christians among the churches, to whom these affecting admonitions are appropriate? Alas! we too have our Laodiceans, in all their poverty, blindness, and nakedness; in all their wretchedness and self-complacency. Churches that once "brought forth fruit abundantly;" on whose altars the sacred fire of devotion was ever bright, and into whose embrace precious souls were often snatched from a perishing world, are now sunk in the slumber of spiritual death. Not that they have deserted the ranks of Christian profession; but that they have wandered wofully from the ways of Christian practice. Not that they have become a scandal in the eyes of the world; but that before Him who "seeth not as man seeth," they "have lost their first love;" that "having a name to live," they "are dead." By such unfaithfulness the Holy Ghost is grieved. O how important, that those in this state should be awaked to "repent and do their first works," lest God should "come unto them quickly, and remove their candlestick out of his place."

I. The first step towards the healing of the sick is a knowledge of the symptoms and extent of the malady. To the SYMPTOMS OF SPIRITUAL DECLINE among the members of a church, let us first attend.

1. One of its earliest forms, is that of *a want of a spiritual mind*. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." It is not only the sure and essential preparation for the life and peace of heaven, but an infallible criterion by which the life and flourishing state of religion in the soul at present may be determined. "They that are after the Spirit, do mind the things of the Spirit." They have their minds habitually interested and occupied with spiritual things.

Their hearts are set on things above; their meat is to do the will of God; their great concern and chief engagement are with the salvation of their souls and the glory of their Master. As they become destitute of this happy frame of mind, they are lukewarm, and approach the character of those who are carnal.

Many are the ways by which this approach may be detected. When professed Christians can be much in each other's society, without communing together upon those great and precious topics of grace, and love, and duty, the savor of which should impart a freshness and life to all their intercourse; when they do not love, as fellow-pilgrims, to talk together by the way; or do not feel that bond of Christian fellowship which unites the hearts of all faithful disciples; then indeed they are not "walking after the Spirit." When, in addition to these evidences of spiritual declension, you observe their affections as much engrossed with the objects of this life as with those "above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God;" when worldly business is made the great concern of life, and the business of eternity is subordinate, the former receiving the strength and the labor, the latter but the form and profession; then know for a truth that among that people there is a sad spiritual declension.

2. But lukewarmness is also manifested by *formality in the exercise of public worship.* Vital religion flourishes among those who can say with David, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents

of wickedness." "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" But alas, how many the churches in which but a very few hearts are tuned to such strains; and the professed followers of Christ assemble rather from custom and a sense of propriety, than from any spiritual desires! How lamentable their carelessness when in the presence of God, and their want of that solemnity of mind, and prayerfulness and meekness of spirit, so essential to a profitable use of the means of grace!

When among the members of a church there appears an habitual coldness in prayer; when there is among them no impressive sense of sin; no hungering after righteousness; no tenderness of heart; no spirit to embrace and rejoice in the promises of the Gospel; to look by faith to the crucified Saviour, and commune with God; when coldness and formality are become so dominant, that all the affecting thoughts and recollections connected with the Supper of the Lord, are of no avail; and those who wait upon that ordinance, instead of renewing their covenant engagements to Christ, with deep repentance and lively devotion under the remembrance of his dying love, can approach the solemn ordinance with no emotions more elevated than those of common seriousness, it should be taken for granted that religion is in a state of dangerous decay. The tree doth not bring forth "fruit in its season;" the leaf thereof is withering; the hand of the husbandman to search it, and the outpourings of the Spirit to revive it, are needed, lest it perish.

3. Another symptom of declension is *conformity to the world*. "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your mind." Our blessed

Master "gave himself for us, that he might purify unto himself a *peculiar* people, zealous of good works." So long as a Christian shall maintain in his soul the power of religion, he will feel no desire, nor can he be persuaded to descend in his views, affections, and efforts, to a conformity with those who have never known "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ."

Can there be a more unpromising feature in the appearance of any people, than that of fondness for the manners, luxuries, and pomp of the world? The bad cultivation of a garden is not sooner known by the multitude of its weeds, than a lukewarm church by the worldly spirit of its members. A spirit of prayer cannot thrive in the atmosphere of a prayerless world. Love and zeal must wane, as they approach the contaminating examples of those who live but for themselves. There is no more obvious proof that spiritual declension has already made lamentable progress in the heart of a Christian, than that he begins to measure the length of worldly conformity to which he may venture, without forfeiting the good opinion of his brethren, or materially compromising the interest of religion. A Christian in health is bold and decided; not anxious to delineate the precise line between religion and the world, because resolved never to wander so far from the great centre of religion as to find occasion for its guidance.

4. Another evidence of lukewarmness is, *a want of zeal for the cause of religion and the glory of God.* Wherever the Gospel is successful upon the hearts of men, and the souls of Christians are animated with the love and praise of the blessed Redeemer, there assuredly will be seen an earnest desire that perishing sinners should be blessed with the privileges, and converted under the saving grace of the

Gospel. A spirit of prayer, united with that of diligent exertion for the spread of the Gospel, will conspicuously prevail. The necessity of labor and of pecuniary sacrifice will not discourage this happy fellowship. Looking unto Jesus, and unwearied by "the contradiction of sinners," they will "give all diligence," by private and public means; in supplication; in circulating the truth; in the labors of Sabbath-schools, or Bible, or Tract, or Missionary Societies, or any other institution formed for the glory of God; to contribute some little aid to the great cause of man's salvation. The opposite of this blessed disposition is manifested, when among the members of a church there is no community of feeling and of prayer for the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom; when their "ears are dull of hearing," and their hearts are slow to rejoice at the tidings of prosperity in any portion of Zion; when with the efforts, and wants, and hardships of those who have taken their life in their hand, and gone to the heathen, for their Master's cause, they feel no affectionate and prayerful sympathy.

But more especially is it manifested in the languishing of religious institutions, and in a want of prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit of God. Do you know a people among whom a Sabbath-school cannot flourish; or whose Bible or Missionary Society is either entirely given up, or maintained but by a few members, with zeal scarcely perceptible? Do you know a people having no lively interest in the supply of the poor and the heathen with the bread of life, and no disposition to contribute of their means to this cause so solemnly bequeathed by Jesus to his church? Do you know a people among whom there is no prevailing anxiety for the blessing of God upon the ministry of the word; no union of labor and prayer that the means of

grace may be attended among them with the reviving and converting effusion of the Holy Ghost; no hearty participation in the strivings of that army of the faithful by which the throne of grace is so besieged, till "He that sitteth on the throne" shall "breathe upon the slain," and cause a glorious revival among the millions who are "dead in trespasses and sins?" Then be sure you know a people who, no matter what their devotion to the form and ceremony of religion, or their attachment to the distinctive peculiarities of their creed, have "a name to live" while they "are dead"—have the form of godliness without its power.

5. Another evidence of spiritual declension is *a low regard for the strictness and sanctity of the Sabbath.* To one of a truly spiritual mind, all the hours of the Sabbath are precious. He truly welcomes the holy day; feels a pleasure inexpressible in its calmness, retirement, and devotional associations; loves to consider the heavenly happiness as prefigured in the pleasures of an earthly Sabbath; and instead of any anxiety that the holy obligations of the day should terminate, would most thankfully bear the whole spirit and seriousness of the Sabbath into all the business of the week. But far different are the feelings of him whose heart has strayed from the path of life. Are his thoughts carefully watched, lest they grovel with earthly cares? Do you behold in him that seriousness of conversation, that spiritual engagement of thought and feeling, so peculiarly appropriate to the holiness of the season? If he only reads a little more of Scripture than ordinary, and abstains from attention to worldly business, is he not contented with his Sabbath, though amusements be indulged, books read, conversation shared, and company seen, by which his mind

cannot but be diverted from spiritual pursuits? As there is no better expedient for growth in grace than Sabbath faithfulness, so is there no surer step to religious decay than Sabbath negligence. And it may be taken for granted, that wherever a Christian community have come to making a division of the Sabbath between God and the world, so as to have their hours of seriousness and of relaxation from seriousness, and to anticipate the following day by a little antepast of its freedom; there, vital religion has already declined to a mournful degree.

6. *A want of union among the members of a church* is another symptom of spiritual declension. It was in times of great spiritual prosperity, while the Gospel was extending through the earth, and Christians were glorying in being counted worthy to suffer in the cause of Christ, that their enemies were constrained to exclaim, "Behold, how these Christians love one another." Our adorable Master, in those words, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another," has left us a criterion by which to determine, not only whether our religion is flourishing, but whether we have any to flourish. "How good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." But what a grief to the heart of a true Christian is it, when the members of a church, instead of associating together as children of the same heavenly adoption, soldiers in the same fight of faith, and debtors to the same immeasurable grace; instead of being "kind, tender-hearted, forgiving one another even as" they hope "God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven" them, are agitated and divided by strife and contention, envyings, jealousies, and evil-speakings, which distract their efforts, quench their spirit of devotion, paralyze the exertions of their minister, and afford an occasion of

triumph to the enemies of the Gospel. "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

7. *Spiritual pride* is another and a very lamentable symptom of decay. The most hopeless appearance of the Laodiceans was their perfect self-satisfaction; imagining they had "need of nothing," while in reality "poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." Woe to those who say, "Peace, when there is no peace." Woe to those who, in a state of lukewarmness and barrenness, instead of "lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning," can fold their arms in contentment and security. The most fatal symptom of one perishing with cold is, that he feels disposed to lay his stiffened body down to sleep upon the frozen earth; and no warning nor entreaty can rouse him from the lethargy, or move him from his perilous purpose. If such symptoms be mournful, what shall be said of the spiritual condition of those who, while surrounded with the painful evidences of lifeless formality; of conformity to the world; of the absence of all spiritual mindedness; of Christians divided; zeal departed; the Sabbath neglected, and valuable institutions dying; and while conscious in themselves of coldness and deadness, can look around upon the desolate scene, and within upon their own unfaithfulness, without humiliation: nor only without humiliation, but without even anxiety or serious reflection; perhaps with a spiritual pride that speaks the language of Loadicea, "*We are rich, and in need of nothing;*" or the words of the Pharisee, "*God, we thank thee that we are not as other men are.*" "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" what the Spirit saith unto this people. "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly,

and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

II. Having now enumerated some of the symptoms of declension in religion, it will not be out of place to take a view of some of the CAUSES *by which such lamentable appearances are usually produced.* They will be seen by taking a few individuals out of all the members of a church, where spiritual decay has exhibited its desolations, and investigating their habits. We mention,

1. *A neglect of the word of God.* "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Such was the answer of Jesus to the insidious enemy who would have allured him away from God; and such should be the language of every Christian soul, when tempted to neglect the Bible. It is the precious means of his nourishment, refreshment, and consolation; "more to be desired than gold;" "sweeter than honey;" "converting the soul," "rejoicing the heart," "enlightening the eyes," "making wise the simple." How did the Psalmist prize the word, when he exclaimed, "Oh how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day." "Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors!" With such experience, the hearts of all who live near to God agree. They literally feed upon the word. The communications of the Gospel are often their means, through the blessing of the Spirit, of near and precious communion with God; and the more they read and meditate upon the divine testimonies, the more do they grow in grace, and in that knowledge for which the apostle counted "all things but loss."

There are several ways by which a want of proper re-

gard for the Bible is discovered. They only can be considered as really in the way to be profited by the word, who read it habitually and frequently, with a real desire to know the will of God for the purpose of performing it. Where was a Christian ever seen growing in grace, watchful, prayerful, and spiritual, who did not thus wait upon the word? And where is the individual to be found, habitually neglecting the Bible, in whom the spirit of prayer and of watchfulness is not low, if indeed it can even be said to have an existence?

But among those who do habitually read the Scriptures, a want of due regard to them is often manifested in the neglect of those two essential companions of all profitable use of the word, *meditation and prayer*. The Bible is indeed a treasure "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold;" but it will not yield its precious substance unless diligently sought. The way to seek this treasure, and the diligence, earnestness, application, and prayer required for its profitable pursuit, are described in the following words from the second chapter of Proverbs: "My son, if thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Though all Scripture is "profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness," it should not be expected to answer all these important purposes, and show all its fitness for them, but to him who "*searches the Scriptures*," and "*follows after* righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." "Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of

the Lord, who meditates thereon day and night;" and who, like the Psalmist, accompanies his meditation with praying, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in due season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

But not so are those who read without meditation and prayer. The fruit of such reading will be but "as the chaff which the wind driveth away." Of such an inadequate use of the Bible, the natural offspring is formality in all devotional duties. The soul becomes barren; the heart cold. The sense of our necessities departs. The conviction of sin dies away. The glory and majesty of God lose their impression on the mind. The love of Christ; our need of him; the exercise of faith; the thirst after righteousness; the feeling of our continual dependence upon divine grace; the spirit of prayer; all decline, day by day. Though prayer be kept up in its form, it will be almost entirely in form. The heart unimpressed with its wants, will not know for what to pray. And the natural consequence is, soon almost entirely to give up even the habitual *form* of praying. From this downward road, and from the gate which leads to it, may all that read these pages, and he that writes them, through the mercy of God, be preserved!

2. But we shall find another important cause of spiritual decline, in *the neglect or inadequate exercise of secret prayer*. It cannot be necessary, in this place, to show how perfectly the whole spirit and power, and even existence, of vital religion, are dependent upon the duty of secret prayer. One might attempt as well to live without breath, as to be a Christian without prayer. A healthy state of

body is not more invariably indicated by the free and regular beating of the pulse, than a lively state of the soul by a regular habit and free exercise of a spirit of prayer. As we judge of a child that has no care for its daily food, do we judge of a Christian who feels no desire after communion with God. Both are declining; both must have a physician. "Pray without ceasing," "pray always," saith the Scripture. Jesus taught "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." That blessed Example of all Christians was abundant in prayer. And what has, in all ages, been the peculiarity of him who has drunk deepest of his spirit, imitated the most closely his example, and enjoyed the most largely his love? "*Behold, he prayeth.*" Who has ever been a shining light in the world, whose spirit was not distinguished in its every feature with the impress of prayer? Who has ever made shipwreck of the faith, or backslidden from the appropriate stand of a professor of religion, in whose experience it could not be discovered that the first symptoms of decline were manifested in a difficulty of the breath of prayer?

Some professors of religion, who make it a rule to pray in private twice at least every day, *do not keep to their rule.* Almost any excuse can serve for its violation. Their sense of the duty, necessity, and pleasure of prayer, is not sufficiently abiding and solemn to set them resolutely against all temptations to negligence. Morning slumbers and evening drowsiness overcome them, when they should be found on their knees. Often the cares of the world are entered upon before the cares of the soul have had their attention. Often, indeed, the business of the world has so anticipated the infinitely greater business of eternity, as to have gained the whole occupancy of the mind, at the very time when,

in outward appearance, and in the profession of his lips, the sinner is communing with his God.

But among many of those who suffer nothing to steal away the seasons habitually appropriated to secret devotion, the worm that eats away the heart of the tree, and brings on its declension, may be discovered in their *manner* of engaging in prayer. Do they read the Scriptures as preparatory to prayer? But in what manner? Perhaps only in the spirit of students, for purposes of mere information, and with the eye of criticism; or more probably with haste, carelessness, coldness, and wandering of mind, instead of that humble, prayerful, meditative spirit, with which a sinner should seek the contrite heart, the lively faith, the love, reverence, and adoration of an acceptable worshipper.

But after reading, in what manner do they go to the throne of grace? "Boldly," indeed; but not in the boldness of a penitent soul, embracing and rejoicing in the covenant of grace. Boldly, indeed; but with the boldness which cold feelings, distracted minds, and mere formality produce. They do not feel their wants, sins, weakness; they have no thirsting after righteousness; they do not pant after God. And yet with such prayer they are satisfied. Rising from it under the satisfaction of feeling that they have discharged a periodical debt, they enter upon the cares of life with that lightness of heart, which says they have left nothing undone.

And here, let it be marked, is the first step in the downward path from the peace of God and the health of the soul: I do not mean merely this wandering of thoughts, and coldness of heart, sometimes occurring in prayer; for such sins all have occasionally to mourn; but the *contentment* with which the frequent recurrence of such sins is re-

garded. This rising up from a throne of grace, where God has been mocked with words without meaning; prayer without desire; confession without conviction; acknowledgment without sorrow; thanksgiving without gratitude; promises without sincerity; the name of Christ without faith;—and yet no self-condemnation; no self-loathing; no efforts to awaken the soul to its danger, and the heart to its duty; no anxious exertions to summon the scattered affections away from the world, to preach to them their guilt, and urge them onward to heaven: this is the sad token of spiritual decay, against which, all who name the name of Christ should unremittedly watch.

3. This leads to the consideration of another cause of spiritual decline: *a neglect of self-examination.* A man's accounts in his business with men will not more certainly become deranged by a neglect of examination, than will those infinitely more momentous accounts, in which his soul is concerned with God. Self-examination should be continual, because the efforts of enemies are unceasing; vigilant, because the snares of our enemies are extremely deceitful; universal, because there is no place where we may not be assailed, no moment in which we may not go astray, no being but may hurt our souls.

Do we habitually repent of our sins, truly believe in Christ for their forgiveness, and hourly strive against them *all?* Is there any sin with which we are at peace; which we deliberately indulge; which occasions no anxiety nor contrition; which grows, instead of dying? Are our affections set on things above? Is the spirit of the world, of pride, luxury, and mammon, mortified? Do we live like pilgrims and strangers, feeling the value of the soul and the vanity of earthly things; realizing the preciousness of our

time; "striving to enter in at the strait gate;" and "pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God?" As men of God, do we flee the idols of the man of sin, and "*follow after* righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness; fighting the good fight of faith, that we may lay hold on eternal life?" Does the love of Christ constrain us to live unto him; to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of him;" to be "willing to suffer the loss of all things, that we may win Christ, and be found in him?" Do we feel a lively zeal for the cause of Christ and the salvation of souls? Are we doing all we can to promote the glory of God and the good of our fellow-creatures? Do we use our time, talents, influence, and property, for the cause of religion? Are we growing in grace, in humility, faith, the love of the Scriptures, the spirit of prayer, and the subjugation of ourselves? Such are some of the questions with which the Christian should be ever prying into and proving the state of his heart; such are the serious visitors before whom he should frequently call up his most secret thoughts for inspection and trial. "Who can understand his errors?" Therefore should we pray, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults;" "set my secret sins in the light of thy countenance;" "search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" "He that doeth these things shall never fall." But he who neglects them will wander from God, just in proportion to his negligence. Soon will he find himself in utter darkness and wretched confusion.

Oh! ye that have given over the keeping of your souls, be persuaded to investigate their affairs. Look how your accounts stand with God. Consider how you will be able

to appear, when the Judge shall summon you to "give an account of your stewardship." Are you afraid to investigate? Then be certified your affairs must be in dreadful need of scrutiny. But be not afraid. Infinitely better is it to know the worst, now while there is time to repent and amend, than when death and eternity shall stare you in the face. Infinitely better to examine your souls' affairs, no matter what the pain of the discovery, now while "he that asketh, receiveth," than leave them to be settled at that day when he who cannot render up his talents with increase, must himself sink under the eternal wrath of God.

We have now considered three of the principal sins which lie at the root of spiritual decay. Only let one be negligent of the Scriptures, or careless in secret prayer, or remiss in self-examination, and he will soon see the most lamentable consequences in all the departments of his soul's affairs. Instead of a tree planted by rivers of water, and bringing forth its fruit in due season, he will be likened unto that barren fig-tree by the way-side, unprotected, uncultivated, from whose roots all the outpourings of heaven pass away; whose blossoms may please the eye, but whose fruit shall fall untimely; whose very leaves soon must wither; and for which, unless it revive, the command shall issue, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"

It is from causes such as those we have mentioned, that professors of religion come to the neglect, and often the disuse of that most important portion of domestic duty so essential to family religion, to the education of children, to the comfort of parents, to the welfare of servants, and to the interests of the church of Christ—*family worship*. It is from such causes, that congregations in which the life of religion and the power of the Gospel were once conspicuous,

come, through the unfaithfulness of professed Christians, and especially of those who are considered the leaders among the people, to exhibit that want of a spiritual mind; that formality in public worship; that spirit of worldly conformity; that want of zeal for the cause of religion and the glory of God; that low regard for the strictness and sanctity of the Sabbath; that want of union among professed Christians; and, frequently, that most hopeless spiritual pride, which mark a people on whose doorposts the Lord hath written his own charge of *lukewarmness*, and whom he will reject with abhorrence.

Should these remarks arrest the attention of any who have reason to believe they are in a state of declension, such as that above described, may the Lord enable the writer to say "a word in season" to their hearts.

Dear brethren, have you not most melancholy reason, from all your feelings at this time, to fear that you have been deceiving yourselves; that you never have been Christians; that your hearts were never changed? With what misgiving of mind; with what shame of conscience, unless your consciences be seared, and your eyes blinded, must you approach the table of the Lord! Oh, how must every look of the Saviour shame you; his every wound and groan upbraid you!

Dear brethren, how will you stand the terrors of a death-bed? How will you then bear the recollection of your broken vows and resolutions, your neglected privileges, your abused mercies, and your despised warnings? How will you be able to stand, when you shall see eternity just before you; and, looking back upon yourselves, shall behold your spiritual affairs all in confusion; the founda-

tion of your hopes unexamined; and an awful uncertainty whether you are to meet the face of God in peace or wrath, rising up at every moment to torture your anxious souls?

Oh, come to yourselves! arise, go unto your Father, and say unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Your heavenly Father, though offended, is yet waiting to be gracious. He will see you afar off, and will come out to meet you, and in the arms of his love, will embrace you; and there shall be joy among the angels of God, as when a sinner repenteth.

Consider, brethren, what injury your example is continually doing to the cause of religion, and to the souls of men. With what feelings do men of the world regard you? If they are disposed to despise religion, they will see your inconsistent spirit, and be emboldened. If disposed to take up with a low standard of religion, they will call you Christians, think it enough to reach your standard, and thus, in all probability, ruin their souls. But, what is the influence you are daily, though silently, producing upon the members of your families, and all within the reach of your influence? Must they not either perceive and lament your inconsistent example, or else be receiving every moment its contamination? Must not your children be trained up under the most erroneous impressions of the real spirit and duty of a Christian? Must not the churches with which you are connected, and the ministers to whose preaching you listen, feel the evil of your defection, in proportion to your numbers, and your standing? If you are looked up to, among any people, for your age, experience, or standing in society, should you not tremble at the responsibility which you so unfaithfully discharge?

Then, oh backsliding souls, by your own fears and wretchedness; by all your professions, vows, and resolutions; by the Spirit whom you have grieved, and the Saviour you have forsaken; by the guilt and the danger of your condition; by the blood of the souls you are ruining; and the pangs of that death-bed, to which you are hastening; be exhorted and entreated to return, and seek the face of God. The Lord hath not forgotten to be gracious; his mercy is not clean gone for ever. "Though your sins be as scarlet," repent, and "they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." But "what thou doest, do quickly." *Be in good earnest. Make sure and thorough work.* Have done for ever with half-way work. Time enough has been lost, and pain enough has been felt, to forbid eternally any thing short of a complete surrender to Christ. That you may have grace to make it, and that the rest of your life may lead straightway to heaven, the Lord in mercy grant, through our Lord Jesus Christ!

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THE

CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S

AFFECTIONATE ADVICE

TO

A MARRIED COUPLE.

BY REV. JAMES BEAN, A.M.

CHAPTER I.

Important nature of the Marriage Union.—Danger of remissness in Duties formerly paid.—Treatment of Relations.

THE marriage relation is the most important of any you are capable of forming in this life. It is not your own happiness only, but that of others also, that may be affected by an improper behavior in this connection. It is a union constituted with a view, not merely to the reciprocal benefit of the two persons who agree to form it, but likewise to the manners and the happiness of society at large.

Smaller communities are the nurseries of larger ones. At a certain time of life a transplantation is made, and the larger field of society takes its character from those qualities which were brought into it from the little inclosures of family life. You are therefore not to consider yourselves merely as two friends, who have agreed to share each other's trials or enjoyments; but as the founders of a little community of rational and immortal creatures, who may hereafter found other small communities, and from whom in process of time, a *multitude* may spring. To this multi-

tude, stationed here and there, according to the allotments of Divine Providence, you may give a cast of character, the influence of which may be matter of pleasure, or of pain, both to themselves and those with whom they are connected, long after you have ceased to act in the present scene. And though you may never move far from the spot on which these observations are addressed to you; yea, and ere long be forgotten even in this little circle; yet the good or evil influence of your conduct on this circumscribed spot may take such a range, as to be felt where the name even of your country is scarcely known.

But even this, though a large view of the possible extent of your influence, is comparatively but a confined one. It may be felt to eternity. The members of your family are *immortals*. Such also will be their successors. They will not only have a place in society, but an account to render to God. Before him they must appear at the great audit of the world, "to receive according to the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad," 2 Cor. 5 : 10; and to *you* they may be in some measure indebted for the terror or the transport they may feel at that solemnity.

From these considerations, see the importance of your connection, and accept of that advice which your minister feels it his duty to address to you.

I will consider you as *fellow-travellers* on the road of life; not brought together by accident, or as those who have consented to keep together on the journey merely from a regard to convenience, but from a cordial esteem of each other, heightened by a tender attachment, which has led you to make choice of each other as companions, independent of a view to the conveniences of travelling in company. You have given yourselves up to each other; and have, in the presence of God, pledged yourselves to bear each other's burdens, to consult each other's peace of mind, and to concur, invariably, in endeavoring to render the journey as pleasant to each other as possible. Thus conjoined, you have committed a trust to each other. Neither of you have

your felicity in your own hands. Neither of you have it in your power to be completely happy without the consent of the other. Never may you repent of this surrender. But a knowledge of the imperfections of human nature makes me anxious for you; lest, after rendering the first stage of the journey delightful by the interchange of every endearment, you should sink into the unhappy condition of those to whom the greatest infelicity of the journey is that they are obliged to travel together.

To avoid the evils into which the infirmities of our nature may plunge us, we should enter *betimes* on the use of preventives.

With this view, the first thing to which I exhort you is, an attention to the preservation of that affection for each other which first determined you to be partners for life. In the continuance of this alone, you will find the sufferings of the present state considerably reduced. Trials and difficulties are the common lot of humanity, and you cannot hope for an exemption from them. Rough roads, dark nights, and stormy days are to be expected; but while your affections continue undiminished, you will, in this circumstance, find a considerable alleviation of the difficulties with which you have to contend. The trials which occur by the way will be less felt, when they serve as occasions of proving afresh the care and tenderness which the travellers here have for each other.

When I exhort you to attend to the preservation of that affection which first determined you to become partners for life, I am not to be understood as if I expected that the fervor experienced at its commencement would continue. *That* will abate. But though time and familiarity will assuredly carry off much of the first ardor, a true affection will receive improvement from time. Time will render it a more chastened, rational, and steady principle, if it be cultivated. If it be cultivated, I say; otherwise, there may be a transition from idolatry to aversion.

To cultivate this kind of affection, neither of you should

be remiss in those attentions which you have been accustomed to pay to each other. Let not the husband grow negligent of any of those marks of regard by which a wife feels herself acknowledged preëminently a friend and companion. She perceives herself *still* distinguished, when all the esteem, compassion, or good manners which her partner is ready to express to others, is, with a promptitude evidently unstudied, still more cordially shown to her. Conjugal affection is a delicate plant. It cannot thrive under indifference. Sullen taciturnity checks its growth. But it dies when scarcely any time is spent at home; when everybody can interest the husband in conversation but the wife; when she is the last person thought of in a recreation, or the least considered in an accommodation.

Let not, however, the wife be too ready to consider the behavior of her husband as expressive of indifference. Such conclusions often originate in the folly, pride, or petulance of the observer. To prevent our drawing them too hastily, let it be considered, that as an object becomes familiar to us, our esteem of it, though not diminished, naturally becomes a more silent sentiment. A woman must guard against the tormenting disappointments to which childish expectations render her liable. For there is a childishness in her expecting always to be caressed; and if she do not become more rational in her expectations, this folly will occasion its own punishment. She will fancy that she is neglected; she will complain; and her complaints will produce aversion.

There should likewise be some allowance made for what is natural to men, especially Englishmen: namely, a certain bluntness, through which they seem to be indifferent when they are not really so. What may seem to improper judges inattention to others, to more penetrating observers is manifestly nothing but an honest inattention to themselves; a superiority to the mean arts of those interested persons whose chief study is the cultivation of an insinuating address.

But should there appear at times something more than

mere inattention, something that evidences a disturbance of temper, she is then perhaps called to allow for the agitations of mind to which *men* are particularly liable, from their having more to do with the world than women have. It is a serene region in which a woman moves; not so that into which the head of a family is often driven for the support of those who depend on him. In the midst of a thousand vexations from the stupidity, negligence, or knavery of those with whom his business lies, he has to earn that bread which his wife and children may eat in tranquillity. Should he, therefore, when he comes home from this turbulent scene, omit a customary mark of affection, eat his meal in silence, or return a short answer to a civil question, let not the wife consider such behavior as any proof of indifference to her. Let her not listen to that demon of discord who would prompt her to resent it as such. Let her recollect that now is the time for her to exert the peculiar virtues of her sex; to call forth all the sweetness, humanity, and tenderness of her nature, in order to soothe him who has been toiling all the day, principally, perhaps, with a view to her comfort.

In cautioning a wife not to be too ready to consider herself neglected, I have not imparted the whole of my advice to her. I have admonished the husband not to be negligent of those marks of regard which are due to his partner; and she is to remember that the same duty is incumbent on her. It will be impossible for affection to be preserved, if she tread in the steps of those inconsiderate persons who, as soon as the marriage rites are celebrated, become remiss in certain engaging things, of which they before had been scrupulously observant. Must not she sink in the esteem of any understanding man, who by her conduct seems to say, "I have now obtained my settlement?" And nothing is more calculated to suggest such an idea, than a relaxation of former attention. When a woman abandons herself to sloth and indulgence—when she degenerates from neatness to negligence, from industry to indolence, from kindness to selfishness—when these omissions are continued, without any necessary

cause, after they have been gently remonstrated against, it is natural for a man of reflection to read this sordid sentiment in his wife's bosom, and for a man of generosity to recoil at the discovery.

She who dreads the entertainment of such an opinion of her in the mind of her husband, must take care to let it have no support from her conduct. She knows what is now pleasing to him, by remembering what was *formerly* so. And he knows how capable she is of giving him pleasure, by recollecting the methods she once took for this purpose, and that they are still practicable. If, with the power still in her hands, she is remiss in the act, there is but one inference for him to make: namely, that it is a matter about which she is not so solicitous as she once was.

Here I am naturally led to notice a monstrous perversion of character observed in some of the sex. I have seen a woman negligent of all the duties that are peculiar to her, and yet tormentingly busy in her husband's immediate province. If a woman would preserve the affections of her husband, let her not only be attentive to him in all the engaging actions which her sex, her situation in the family, and her vows, give him a right to expect from her, but let her confine herself to these.

The disposal of his time, or his property, his journeys, his connections, etc., are things to be regulated by the circumstances of his calling; a subject which probably he best understands. I cannot but advise her, therefore, for her own sake as well as his, to leave these things entirely to his management; and to remember, that it is her province to soften, to cheer, and to refresh that mind on which the weightiest cares of a family press.

The unfriendly tendency of such interference in women to the maintenance of mutual affection, is, however, not more manifest, than is that of a supercilious treatment of women. I refer to those ungracious men, who never honor the understanding or contribute to the satisfaction of a wife. For though not able to dictate, may she not be capable of

advising? Many a man, wise in his own esteem, might have been saved from ruin, had he only deliberated with that prudent, thoughtful, and affectionate wife, to whose inquiries he would scarcely vouchsafe an answer, though introduced with all the graces by which a gentle and submissive spirit solicits attention.

Far be this supercilious behavior from him to whom I address these precautions; and who has solemnly pledged himself, not only to maintain, but to *honor* his wife. Rather let him deliberate with her who ought to be his dearest, and is his most disinterested friend—even in those affairs which it is his immediate duty to superintend. He may derive useful hints from a female mind in some particulars, though it may not—from want of practice—be comprehensive enough to grasp the whole of his system. And if not, yet he gratifies an innocent solicitude to know something of affairs in which she is interested. At least, he prevents the mortification which a sullen or contemptuous concealment occasions.

Such communications contribute very much to keep up the warmth of a rational affection, as they honor the understanding of a woman; as they give her credit for taking an equal interest with her husband in his cares, anxieties, and labors; and, above all, as in such deliberations she feels herself treated as a friend. There is a way of conducting them which draws after it nothing to regret. It will be for the happiness of both parties that these communications be obviously the issues of a generous confidence.

There is a circumstance in every matrimonial connection which may have a considerable influence on the happiness of the married pair: there are *relations* on both sides. On properly managing the regard paid to these persons, the preservation of mutual affection is found in many cases very much to depend.

Here, some of the most humiliating instances have been exhibited of that selfishness which cannot be satisfied with any thing short of the monopoly of affection. How unrea-

sonable is it to expect that love to me should extinguish affections which are due to those, whom duty, nature, and habit, require me *yet* to love! Our mind is perverted, if we do not perceive something additionally amiable in that married person, who, in the midst of new connections, cares, and occupations, still shows to a tender parent the affectionate and reverential spirit of a dutiful child; or manifests the still existing union of souls, which interested a fond brother and sister in each other's happiness. If my affections be rational, they will be heightened by observing that the object of my peculiar attachment appears amiable, in whatever relation I view this object. On the other hand, I am the subject of a sordid passion, if I can rest satisfied with attentions paid to me, while I observe that the person thus devoted to me is inattentive to every thing else.

Affection to our kindred is not inconsistent with the fondest attachment of the heart to a husband or a wife. Do not therefore encourage that littleness and pride which would lead you to think yourself defrauded of something that was your own, when you see any tender regard paid to them. It is a mean jealousy of temper that makes us *prompt* to consider ourselves unrivalled. It is a base pride that leads us to put an invidious construction on those signs of respect and esteem which are shown to others. Let married persons guard against such a cause of unhappiness to themselves, by considering that the distribution of affection does not necessarily diminish its quantity; but that it is even capable of increasing, as the objects on which it is exercised multiply. Conjugal affection can indeed be shared only by two persons; but this may grow and strengthen, without any loss sustained to it from the cultivation of filial or fraternal affection.

While the bonds of matrimony must not be suffered to dissolve those of filial piety, it may be as well, however, to suggest this hint to married persons: Let them avoid, as far as is consistent with duty to relations, that kind of manner, in their treatment of them, which is calculated to awaken

jealousy in the married partner. Through neglect of this rule of prudence, the visit of a relation has sometimes been the period of misery to a couple who had hitherto lived in harmony. Cannot we be glad to see a parent, a sister, or a brother, without reducing a wife or a husband to a cipher in the house, during their stay in it? Is it prudent to be so profuse in the expressions of our regard for them, as to lead the partner of our life to have an interest in their departure?

These admonishings on the article of attentions, seemed to me deserving of your regard. That matrimony was instituted for the happiness of mankind there can be no doubt. But it is not necessary to the fulfilment of this intention, that happiness should spring up spontaneously to those who enter into the marriage state. It deserves our thankfulness to Him who ordained this union, that it will fully answer its intention to those who will be at the pains of guarding against whatever may defeat that intention.

By this sober view I wish you to adjust your hopes. Do not entertain expectations of bliss, which the circumstances of the world, and the imbecility of your nature, will render it impossible to realize. You must not only expect to meet with untoward circumstances in the world, but likewise to discover faults in each other. Neither the scene, nor the actors, will be found to answer the ideas you may have formed of them. The scene you cannot alter; it will be managed by a superior power: but you may accommodate yourselves to it. And this is incumbent on you, not only in the relation you both sustain to the great Disposer, but with respect to the obligations you are under to support one another comfortably, in the various changes through which you may have to pass.

Among other things which should be your care in this view, is the cultivation of *good temper*. But to the consideration of so essential a point, I shall appropriate a separate chapter.

CHAPTER II.

Importance of a kind and amiable Temper and Deportment.

WITHOUT a good temper you can neither enjoy a pleasing situation, nor support an inconvenient one. Without good-nature there may be many valuable qualities; but they would be all gladly exchanged for that sweetness of disposition which compensates for a thousand defects. With this engaging quality, the attentions which have been recommended will be so far from being impracticable, that they will be, as it were, spontaneously produced; or if there be an occasional failure, the omission will be kindly interpreted. It will be attributed to want of thought, rather than to any thing of a more reprehensible nature.

The improvement of our temper is a thing not so much out of our power as is commonly supposed. The general idea is, that good temper is a certain gift of nature, like beauty; which a man cannot have unless he is born with it. It must be confessed that some seem formed, from their very birth, to be the delight of the human kind in this respect; and that others, again, seem to have brought into the world with them an unhappiness of temper which seems incapable of amelioration. The generality of mankind, however, are not found in these extremes. The temper of most people is made up of a mixture of good and bad. The character of the person, in point of temper, is denominated from that quality which has the ascendency.

The predominance of a condemnable temper is not to be charged wholly to the circumstances that excite it, but in part to the not imposing on ourselves that discipline which counteracts the influence of those circumstances which tend to deprave the temper. That the good in our temper may prevail, is a most desirable thing; and this desirable thing is attainable. Now, if interest may be allowed to second the voice of duty, hear what it says to the wedded pair: "If you wish to render your union delightful in all situa-

tions, and to relish it to the very last, seek the improvement of your temper at any price."

On the cultivation of good-nature let me suggest a few hints.

Endeavor to ascertain what is that particular defect of temper into which you are most liable to fall; and make a point of setting a strong guard over yourself in that particular. Let this idea be ever present to your mind: "At that weak part of my nature all the miseries of matrimonial life may enter." This will probably be found a hard service; but the necessity of the case obliges you to it. You have the choice of but two things: you must be incessantly vigilant and self-denying here, or suffer every domestic delight to be torn from you.

But I have another piece of advice to give, namely, Avoid the occasions which excite any unruly temper to which you may be liable. This advice is given to you both with respect to each other. Having ascertained each other's particular imperfection, you have likewise learned what things they are that call it forth. That which provokes your partner must, as far as possible, be shunned.

Here a number of *little things* become objects deserving attention. Nor must they be passed over because they are little. Little things are felt to have great power when they act upon a tender part. An insect could have blinded Samson when in his full strength. No small portion of the uneasinesses that have imbittered married life has arisen out of the insect occurrences which every day produces; and contemptible as they are in themselves, they must be watched on account of the mischiefs of which they are capable.

There is no evil which petty occurrences more frequently generate than *disputes;* nor are there many things which it is more the interest of the married pair to guard against. "The contentions of a wife," saith Solomon, "are a continual dropping." Drop after drop wears a deeper impression than a thousand storms. What, therefore, is that unthinking woman about who indulges a disputing spirit?

who will debate *every* point, and have the last word about straws? She is forcing her husband into other society, and that, perhaps, to which he has had many objections; all of which, however, are at length overcome by the refuge it affords him from the misery of incessant debate. It is not, perhaps, so much to the commission of the more alarming crimes, as to the frequency of frivolous disputes, that the alienation of married people from each other is to be generally ascribed. I may add, that in these irritating encounters, deeds of the worst kind have often had their beginning. Whatever, therefore, you forget, let me conjure both of you to remember the mischief of frivolous disputes.

After all your care, perhaps, some occasional effects of your respective weaknesses will occur. Yet it is not a few eruptions of this sort that will throw you back in the cultivation of good-nature, if you can learn to make due allowance for *constitutional infirmity* in each other. Attend, therefore, to this plain lesson. It will have its advantage in suppressing an unhappy temper in many instances. Where there is a readiness to make this wise and humane allowance, the heart will be no more alienated by a little sally of temper, than by a fit of epilepsy. The paroxysm, in either case, will call forth the compassion of the spectator.

Be it remembered, however, that we must not be called upon too frequently for this allowance; and that it will hardly ever be granted, unless the *tenor* of life be such as forbids a severe construction of an occasional failure. It is indeed the tenor of life that preserves or destroys affection. It is not a few brilliant expressions of love, in the midst of constant unkindness, that will make us enjoy the marriage union; nor is it a few deviations from the line of duty that will render it unpleasant, while the general course of life is expressive of kindness and unquestionable affection. Make a point, therefore, of disciplining your own temper; and be assured that, by so doing, the connection which you have formed will be more than tolerable: it will be pleasing. The recollection of it at some period distant from its com-

mencement, will be grateful; notwithstanding there may some things occur to you, in this retrospect, which you will wish had been otherwise.

Let me entreat you to bestow all the pains on this point which it may require. What equivalent can be found for good-nature? Let the husband be sober and industrious; let the wife be chaste and frugal: by these virtues you may be preserved from some of the miseries which wait on profligacy and extravagance; but while you escape these, what will your house be without good-nature? Not a home! By a *home*, we understand a place in which the mind can settle; where it is too much at ease to be inclined to rove: a refuge to which we flee in the expectation of finding those calm pleasures, those soothing kindnesses, which are the sweetness of life.

All the admonitions, therefore, that I might detail on the article of temper, may be comprised in this short precept: *Endeavor to make your house a home to each other.* Absence will then be no gratification to either party. By the husband's attending to this precept, his return will be welcomed by those whom he left at home. By the wife's observance of this maxim, the husband will return with a pleasure equal to that with which he is received. "The heart of her husband will safely trust in her." Over the door of his house he will see written, "SACRED TO PEACE;" and thither, in the assurance of enjoying that repose he cannot find in the world, he will hasten from its toils and vexations.

CHAPTER III.

Influence of Christian Piety on the Happiness of Married Life.—Conduct which the Holy Scriptures require in Married Persons towards each other.

I HAVE reserved the important subject now to be introduced, for the latter part of my address; for I wish above all things to leave the impression of this on your minds at our parting.

Whatever be our situation, there is one thing indispensably necessary to our enjoyment of the happiness it is capable of yielding: we must endeavor to acquit ourselves as the servants of God in that situation. Thereby we obtain his blessing in it; without which, no condition can long be either safe or comfortable. Let the situation be social or commercial; let it promise little or much; let the government of an empire, or only the care of a family be committed to us, the observation holds equally true. The lot lies in this world, concerning which God has said to mankind, "Thorns and briers shall it bring forth unto you." Piety, however, has resources in a world lying under such a sentence. I persuade myself that you mean to adopt the rules I have suggested to you; yet I should not expect them to be long followed, if I doubted of your having the fear of God in your heart.

Nor is there, if this be wanting, any good security for continued happiness even in those marriage connections where the parties have joined their hands from the most sincere affection for each other. Without this, the sources of patience, resignation, forbearance, compassion, and candid allowance for natural infirmity, are small, and may be soon exhausted. Nor can it be expected that we shall persevere in the more arduous part of that kind of self-discipline which has been mentioned, if reverence for the will of God, and an earnest desire to please him in all things, are wanting. If, therefore, you have rushed into this connection regardless of what is incumbent on you as immortal beings, your business is to correct this error. Its influence will otherwise run through the whole web of life, and prevent many of those enjoyments which marriage was designed to bestow on mankind.

If, however, you are persons of genuine religion, this circumstance is a most favorable omen of your future life. It is the smile of heaven. The maintenance of mutual affection has been recommended to you as a great object of the attention of a married couple. And what is so likely to

keep up its vigor, as a deeply-rooted regard to a religion which cherishes all the tenderness of which our nature is capable? Such is Christianity: a religion which exhibits the highest example of benevolence, and suggests the most powerful motives to its imitation.

Christian piety promises to keep the spirit of conjugal affection alive by that sublime species of benevolence which induces an earnest desire for the spiritual and eternal welfare of all, but especially of those to whom we are more nearly allied. And it has likewise always at hand a motive to the exercise of forgiveness, by that sense of *our own faults*, and our consequent need of forgiveness from God, with which it is ever accompanied.

Religion, while it thus calls forth and strengthens the mutual tenderness of those allied in marriage, further provides for their continued happiness, by teaching them not to expect too much from each other, since neither of them has married an angel, but a human being, "encompassed with infirmity." This just view makes them sober in their expectations, and does much to perpetuate their enjoyment.

Actuated by religious principle, the married pair will not have their happiness interrupted by those altercations which are produced between the love of pleasure and the necessity of resisting its excessive demands. They will likewise be preserved from the embarrassments which in the end imbitter this connection, where the parties have agreed in adopting an expensive style of living. In short, it is by these, and many other concomitants of genuine piety, that old age steals on, without bringing with it the misery of feeling that there is nothing left but the dregs of worn-out enjoyments. Something yet remains that can be tasted without exciting disgust.

A truly pious man makes the Holy Scriptures the rule both of his expectations and his conduct. Making them the rule of his expectations, he embraces "the faith once delivered to the saints," whatever reception it may have in that age in which he happens to live: making them the rule of

his conduct, he consults them with respect to the several relations he may sustain in life, that he may "know how he ought to walk and please God." God has given very particular directions how to conduct ourselves in relative life, that in situations of such importance the servant of God may not be at a loss how to act. The married person, particularly, has his behavior marked out; and these passages the man of piety will study.

It is lamentable to observe how many there are, who take up the volume of inspiration merely as a book that discovers an expedient for escaping punishment; never regarding it as the directory of conduct. If these are your models, you will neither adorn nor enjoy the religion you profess. There is nothing to be expected from your religion, unless it be of that genuine kind, which will make each of you attentive, as in the sight of God, to your respective duties.

What I have, therefore, to recommend to you is, serious meditation, accompanied with prayer to God, on those passages of Scripture which teach you how to act in this relation.

"Husbands, *love* your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies. Let every one so love his wife, even as himself." Eph. 5: 25–33. "Husbands, love your wives, and *be not bitter against them.*" Col. 3: 19. "Ye husbands, *give honor* unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel." 1 Pet. 3: 7.

Perhaps no part of Scripture less requires a comment. The Christian husband is taught by this passage that God requires him to love the woman he has chosen; to be kind and tender to her; yea, to honor her; and, therefore, that the domestic tyrant, the fierce animadverter on every little omission, the husband whose contemptuous treatment of a

wife is an habitual degradation of her, are persons condemned by the Lord of all. Here husbands may learn that something more is required of them than merely to afford a maintenance to a wife. Nothing can compensate for the want of that *love*, required in the passage above quoted. What is a maintenance, any further than it is enjoyed? and how impossible is this, unless it is accompanied with tenderness, kindness, and respectful treatment in words and actions. Alas! for want of these endearments, many a woman, who by her dress seems to tell the world she has a husband that spares no expense to gratify her, is, in all her finery, to be considered as a gaudy victim, ever bleeding under the hands of domestic cruelty.

All that the warmest advocate for women can enforce on husbands, being, as the passages previously quoted show, expressly required by God himself; the next thing to be considered is the *example* which the inspired writer has selected for the model of a husband's behavior towards his companion. "Husbands, love your wives, *even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it;* that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." Eph. 5 : 25–27.

Here is at once example and motive. What more could even an inspired man say, in order to form the husband to every thing affectionate, disinterested, sympathizing, and attentive to his wife, than this: *Love her as Christ loved the church.* He who understands Christianity, finds a volume in such a sentence. His mind instantly recurs to that astonishing instance of benevolence which his Redeemer exhibited, in giving himself up to sufferings and death for our salvation; to that which he showed in sending forth ministers to "preach the Gospel to every creature;" to the tender attention which he pays, now he is in heaven, to all who receive this Gospel; taking care that every thing be provided which is necessary to increase their faith, purify their hearts, administer to their consolation, support them in

their conflicts, and cherish the hope which he has formed in them of participating in the fulfilment of those gracious purposes towards his church, which are to be consummated in heaven, and enjoyed to all eternity. This, says he, is my *pattern*. Such a friend as Christ was to his church, am I to be to my spouse. Am I a part of that body of which he is such a Saviour? Then he gave himself for me. Let me imitate that affection, of the fruits of which, I humbly hope, I am a partaker. I here find myself required to love my wife, though she is not without fault; to interpose between her and danger; to supply, as far as in my power, every thing which can contribute to her comfort; to seek not only her present, but everlasting happiness: for thus did Christ love his church.

To the wife the word of God speaks thus: "Wives, *submit* yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. Therefore, as the church is *subject* unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." Eph. 5: 22–24. "Let the wife see that she reverence her husband." Eph. 5: 33.

Here we should particularly notice that virtue on which the admonition principally turns: namely, submission. A virtue so prominently commended, certainly merits particular attention.

It need not, surely, be necessary to observe, that the superiority which the Scriptures give to the man over the woman, is not that of a master over a slave. The precepts enforced on the husband are of such a kind as to show that the superiority with which he is invested, is founded in reason, and maintained by love. God has not required from the woman the submission of a slave, but a reasonable and advantageous submission; such as a man of good sense knows it becomes him to receive, and an affectionate wife will yield with pleasure. Some women, however, consider every thing of this kind as the relinquishing of all self-defence. Mistaken creatures! It is their best security, as

well as one of their loveliest ornaments. 1 Pet. 3 : 4. Like polished armor, it is both beauty and defence.

Considering the importance given to the virtue now under consideration, we see at a glance, how far from that character which the Holy Scriptures recommend to women, are those who deny to a husband any rule in his house unless he purchase it at the expense of peace. Such conduct is against not only the spirit, but the very letter of Christianity: "Let wives be subject to their own husbands in *every thing*."

The apostle, as if to prevent the possibility of a misunderstanding, enforces his point by a most striking illustration: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Saviour of the body. *Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands* in every thing."

The church is subject to Christ to this extent. She is always to be known by these circumstances: that as her legislator, she receives laws from Christ; as her Lord, she receives commands from him; as her guide, she follows him. That religious society, therefore, which renounces the authority of Christ, and sets up for its own directress in matters of faith and morals, is not the church.

This model of subjection, unreserved subordination, and reverential deference, is a woman in the ties of wedlock to make her *exemplar*—if she would be found in that relation such as God approves. Let her be frugal, industrious, cleanly, and chaste; she is to have the praise of all these good qualities; but let her remember, that if withal she is self-willed and refractory, she is destitute of that virtue in which the Holy Scriptures seem to have concentrated all the good qualities of a wife. Much as she may triumph in the contemplation of her superiority over the idle and extravagant with whom she compares herself, she resists the order of God; and she resembles not the church, but the *world*.

She acts as if she were determined to go as far as possible from the pattern which God has set before her, and had chosen one that is the very reverse of the church.

Let the husband and the wife contemplate the two examples which an inspired apostle has chosen for their respective imitation, and they will find that all which has been said in the former part of this address, is bound on them from more authoritative considerations: God himself requires it.

Make a point of sitting down to reflect on these and other passages in the Sacred Writings, in which the duties of husband and wife are set forth. Perhaps if you made it a rule at the return of any particular day—the annual return of your wedding day, for instance—to peruse them, it might prevent your entirely overlooking what so much concerns the credit and the comfort of each other.

Let me request you both to charge yourselves with this task. Attend to what God teaches you on the subject; and reject, with indignation, those opposite sentiments with which the gay and profligate part of mankind daily insult both God and man. I would have you not only *read* the passages of Scriptures, but examine yourselves by them. "Am I this kind of person, in this relation? Did I act, in such a thing, agreeably to the spirit of these words?" Should any unpleasant circumstances in future arise, inquire whether they may or may not be attributed to your departure from the pattern set before you. In thus examining yourselves by the appointed rule of duty, you may discover what there is in your particular constitution to render the imitation of the pattern peculiarly difficult to you. Carry such difficulties to God; not to request him to relax his laws, but to obtain from him those extraordinary succors which you may need, in order to act on all occasions worthy of your Christian profession.

These are the marks of genuine religion; a divine principle which I pray may daily acquire strength in you. In seeking the growth of vital piety, you will experience an

increase of its attendant blessings. Rest not, therefore, in your present attainments; but endeavor to acquire more and more of the character of a real disciple of Jesus Christ. Consider every discovery, or attainment in the Christian life, which either of you make, as an addition to your common stock of imperishable good; and partake of it together, as those who have no interest separate from each other in any thing. This is to live together "as heirs of the grace of life." 1 Pet. 3: 7. Let this "growing in grace," therefore, be a subject of frequent and earnest prayer to God, for yourselves, and for each other; that you may pass your days together, as both redeemed by the same Saviour, and hoping at last to meet in the same heaven. Thus, instead of being snares to each other, you will proceed through life, blessing and being blest, by administering tender admonitions when you see each other remiss; encouragements, when disheartened; and consolations, when depressed.

CHAPTER IV.

Effects of Christian Piety on a Household.—Advantages of Order in a Family.—The family of Eusebius.—The unhappiness of an Irreligious Couple.

THERE is one duty in particular which the spirit of piety will dictate to you, namely, the *consecration of your house by the daily returns of family worship*. Let there be an altar in your house inscribed with the adorable name of your Creator. Here let the master be daily found, presenting, as the minister of God, the offerings of prayer and praise.

By this acknowledgment of God, a married pair evidence their reverence of his being; they draw down his blessing on their family; they diffuse a spirit of seriousness through it; and probably convey the seeds of piety in many other families. What objects are these to the formers of a new household! And how careful should they be to unite their respective powers in endeavoring to render that effect-

ual which has such happy tendencies! Let not only the husband be ready to perform the duty in question, but the wife also. I have indeed doubted whether there were this concurrence in some houses where, however, the duty was not omitted. I have seen the master waiting for that part of the family which the mistress ought to have seen to be ready to attend him at the hour of prayer. Here is an impediment to family religion, proceeding from something defective in her to whom the internal affairs of a family are principally committed. But I am obliged to confess, that the irregularity in question has not always been entirely the woman's fault. The master has in some measure been chargeable with it, by not fixing a certain hour, or by appointing an inconvenient one for the performance of this important duty.

This, and many other errors, you will avoid, by digesting *a system of family government*, and determining to adhere to it—an expedient which you will find to be a source of numberless advantages; and much more necessary to personal and social happiness, than at first may be conceived. Where there is order, there is silence, facility, and energy.

Among the points to which order should extend, there is none of greater importance than the proper distribution of time. Have a fixed hour for rising, for devotion, and for meals. Let there be an appropriate portion of time for every office, and for the labors or recreations of every member of your family.

How happy in this respect is the house of *Eusebius!* He has a companion who, in her province, acts with him in the maintenance of a well-digested system of domestic government. There is an appointed hour for breakfast; after which, (it being on the whole most convenient,) all assemble to pay their devout acknowledgments to God for the mercies of the preceding night. After this, every one withdraws to his respective employment. This exhibition of order with which you are presented in the morning, is but a specimen of what may be seen through the day. On the Sabbath,

you perceive the like regularity. After breakfast the family are assembled to prayers. They are enjoined to attend this service in the same dress in which they are to appear in the house of God; that the preparation of their persons may not be deferred to too late an hour, and that, instead of spending the last minute at the glass, there may be a little time for reflection or private devotion previous to their attendance on public worship. All being thus ready, at a few minutes notice they are easily collected; and they proceed, as a united and regular family to the house of God.

You perceive nothing like distraction in this house. Every one knows what he has to do. Nor is the *sound judgment* of the superintendents more conspicuous than the *happiness* of the members of this family. Indeed, order is to be recommended, from its tendency to render every one comfortable. It was this excellency and happy tendency of order, exhibited on a large scale, that contributed very much to raise the royal visitor of Solomon to that high pitch of admiration, in which she exclaimed, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand and hear thy wisdom continually."

The hints which I have given to you are the result of observation; and give me leave to say, that in the whole course of my observation there is nothing that has so frequently struck me as a cause of unhappiness to married people, as the want of religion. This defect, nearly or remotely, produces most of the miseries of a state, which was designed for the happiness of the sexes.

The evil effects of disregarding God are seldom more shockingly exhibited than in the history of an irreligious couple. Here, where the greatest temporal enjoyments might be found, there are frequently experienced the most exquisite of human miseries. *The fear of God* being wanting, the union becomes a source of incessant woes. How can it be otherwise with those whose nature is depraved, and who, living without any acknowledgment of God, are under no superior influence to regulate their temper, and to prevent

the violence to which ungoverned passions are subject? They become the tempters and punishers of each other. Offences are given; and no principle existing that would lead them either to forgive injuries or suppress resentment, mutual offences are freely multiplied, and the quantity of wretchedness increases to a dreadful amount. What wonder is it, then, to hear of dire distress in such a family?

But many of the evils proceeding from irreligion are concealed from the public eye. And were all the grief, the loathing, the hatred, the remorse, the apprehensions which are experienced, as conspicuous as the actions to which they give birth, we should not even then have a complete view of the case. We must follow the guilty pair into the eternal world, if we would ascertain all the effects of their impiety. We must hear their reproaches. We must see them, who once exchanged vows of eternal tenderness, transformed into beings of the most hostile dispositions towards each other, and meeting only to augment their mutual accusations. This is the dreadful end to which the history of an irreligious couple tends.

CHAPTER V.

Short account of Evander and Theodosia.—How Christianity supports the members of a religious Family under afflictive events, exhibited in the death of Theodosia.—Conclusion.

Evander and Theodosia were both the offspring of pious parents. Their union was a natural one. It had all the qualities which accompany an attachment founded not merely on similarity of religious views: it was such an affection as they could neither suppress nor direct to another object. But though their attachment was not produced by their religion, it was nourished by it. Whatever they saw in each other's person or temper to unite their hearts, was heightened by the satisfaction they had in each other's piety, and the consequent prospect of spending a harmonious life and a blessed eternity together.

Their hands were joined, and they entered on a state blessed with all the enjoyments which an unshackled affection could yield to minds seasoned with the benevolence and purity of Christianity. Their equal regard to God diminished not one enjoyment in which a fond couple could share; but was, on the contrary, an additional source of pleasure. They "delighted in God;" and they delighted in the society of each other.

Their unanimity, their visible, though unstudied interchanges of kindness, had an assimilating influence on their family, and served to give considerable effect to that religious order which they had established. The invisible world being in a great measure habitually before them, they both, in their respective departments, attended to those who were under them, whether children or domestics, as having the charge of immortals.

Such was their behavior towards their children, that it seemed as if training them for an *eternal* state was, in their view, the principal purpose for which Divine Providence gave them an offspring. And to this business they applied themselves with pleasure. They began *early* with the infusion of religious ideas into the minds of their children; wisely inculcating, at first, those great and simple principles which are the foundation of all religion. They aimed at nothing short of guiding their offspring to Christ, that they might know him, and by the aids of the Holy Spirit yield their tender hearts to him. They conceived that one way to prevent the introduction of evil, was to preöccupy the mind with that which is good; and it never once came into their thoughts that they should be blamed for enforcing a truth on children, because they were too young to see all the bearings of that truth as clearly as their instructors did. They had none of the subtleties and refinements of sceptics in their method of education. They went to work in a straightforward way; what they had learned they taught: they trusted they knew "the way of salvation," and they endeavored to lead their children in the same path.

Impressed with the infinite importance of this part of a parent's duty, they *took pains* in it. To conduct a business of such consequence in a desultory way, was in their opinion but a smaller degree of that criminality which neglects it entirely. It therefore did not content them to inculcate religious ideas; they aimed, in dependence on God, to induce moral habits. The *genuine Christian* was the model they kept in their eye. To see this simple character in their children; to see them avowedly on the side of truth, yet free from all affectation; evidently desirous of living a useful life, yet neither vain nor obtrusive; was a hope they expected not to realize without great pains taken on their part. They counted the cost, and determined to pay it. Hereby they hoped to obtain the divine blessing upon their endeavors. This they constantly prayed for; believing, from what they knew of the depravity of human nature, that without it their labors would fail of success.

But this pious care was not confined to their children; it extended to every member of their family. It began to operate silently at the very first sight of a new domestic. Aware of the sordid ignorance in respect to religion, prevalent in the families of the poorer class, and knowing that in their own house there were better opportunities of learning divine truth, they never employed a servant without feeling an anxious wish that he might know something more of God, by coming among them, than he knew before.

Thus honoring God, they were honored by him. Their family was not a society of starched formalists, distinguished by some unnatural peculiarity of dress or language; but while they looked like the members of other families, they lived differently. They were taught to reverence the word and ordinances of God. They were taught that the blessing of God, and the favor of their common superiors, were to be expected in fulfilling the duties of their stations, and in the discharge of good offices towards each other. *Favoritism* was struck out of that system which the heads

of the family adopted: every one knew that impartial kindness was the law of the house.

Thus taught, they repaid their teachers by practising the lessons in which they had been instructed. The house was the abode of regularity, industry, uprightness, and peace. It was not exempt, indeed, from human infirmities; yet it showed to what a degree of excellence the human character, under proper management, may be brought; and it produced social gratifications, untasted where the cultivation of religious principle is neglected. Nor was it easy to mistake the source whence all the regularity and comfort of this abode proceeded: the genuine religion of Evander and Theodosia. Their authority, their instruction, and their example, accounted for all that distinguished this happy society.

They had the reward of seeing the fruit of their labors. That house, over which they ruled in the fear of God, was not exempt from the ordinary visitations of Providence. Like other houses, it was subject to the incursion of death; and at length the event took place; but not accompanied with its usual horrors. The trial was softened by the manner in which it was met, both by those who departed, and those who were called to give them up: the former being enabled to die rejoicing in the truths of that Gospel which had been inculcated in the family, and the latter to find a relief under the painful stroke which separated one friend from the other, in the well-grounded hope of meeting again in a better world.

The person whom it pleased God first to take from this family, was one of its most important and most lovely members. It was Theodosia: the wife, the mother, the delightful companion of her husband, the nurse and instructress of his children, the discreet manager of his domestic affairs; whose unremitting attention banished confusion from the house, and whose sweetness of temper filled it with peace. I need not detail every particular of her last illness: an account of the concluding circumstances will be sufficient for my purpose.

Her disease was of a lingering kind; a circumstance of peculiar advantage for manifesting the influence of religion in death. Evander approached her bedside one morning, as usual, to inquire how she had passed the night; to whom she replied in the following terms: "I should be glad for your sake, dear Evander, to be able to say, I have had a better night than usual. I know how such a report would gladden your heart; but I am not able to give such an account of myself. Indeed, I find myself going apace, and I had determined, before I had the pleasure of seeing you this morning, to endeavor, before my illness renders me any weaker, to gratify a wish which I have almost through life indulged. I have never felt much solicitude about the kind of death with which I might finish my course: one thing only I have been desirous of, which is, that I might not leave the world without being able to make such a declaration of the mercies of God as might encourage those who are walking in his ways, and admonish those who are not." She was going to tell her husband what was the wish she desired to gratify, but was interrupted by perceiving the tide of grief suddenly rising in his breast. They grasped each other's hands, and some minutes were spent by them both in the silent indulgence of tears.

When this effusion had, in some measure subsided, she began: "We have thought of this before; and I trust we shall both be sustained in this last conflict. To you, indeed, the hardest part of the trial is allotted. You love me; and therefore, unworthy as I am of such a regard, you will feel a loss. I have, indeed, something here for which I could think it worth while to live. It is you. It is my children. But there is One above, for whom I can willingly leave you all, dear as you are to me. I hope to be with him. Unworthy as I am of the least of his mercies, I trust I may warrantably rejoice in him as the God of my salvation. I have endeavored to know him. He has not suffered me to live in a state of indifference towards him. Grace has taught me what I am, and what I want. It has taught me

to look for present peace and everlasting happiness in making the mediation of a crucified Saviour the ground of my trust, and his example the pattern of my conduct; and that grace encourages me to hope for the forgiveness of my sins through his blood. In this hope of salvation through him, and the sense I have of my infinite obligations to the God of all grace, I rejoice in the prospect before me.

"I have a confidence in you that sets me at ease with respect to the care necessary to be taken of my dear children; but, above all, I am enabled to leave them with God. Thus have I little to lose, in comparison of what I have to gain, by leaving this world: but you, my dear Evander, have yet to maintain the Christian conflict. Be, however, of good cheer. God is all-sufficient.

"You have often encouraged me in my religious course; permit me to make my last recompense to you in kind. God, I know, will bless you. He will keep you amidst the snares of life; direct you in all the labors and difficulties of the family; and support you in the last hour, as he does me. Then shall we meet again. I do rejoice in this expectation. I take delight in the thought of seeing you again.

"I thank you for all your tenderness, care, and kindness; for all your admonitions, reproofs, and counsels; for all the candor with which you have interpreted my failings. I am thankful for the example you have been enabled to set me, and for the care you have taken of my soul. You have watched over me in this respect; and I trust that I shall have reason, as a creature designed for a future state, ever to bless God for bringing us together."

She meant to say more, but her affections weakened the power of utterance; and she, withal, saw it was too much at present for Evander. He would have replied, but the occasion allowed him no command of himself. He would have prayed, and fell on his knees by her bedside; but stopping in the middle of the first sentence—he wept, and retired.

Religion, while it cherished all the sensibilities which adorn the man, opened resources to Evander, who was no

stranger to the views and dispositions which form the Christian. Reflection and prayer in his closet restored to him the power of supporting another interview with Theodosia. He rejoiced with her in the prospect of everlasting felicity. He thanked her for having so well filled her station in life, and kneeling down, he blessed the Father of mercies for having vouchsafed to them that knowledge of himself, the influence of which had hitherto sweetened their society, and now relieved them both, under the pain of separation. When he had risen from his knees, Theodosia expressed a desire that all the family might be admitted into her chamber when their minister should make his visit. "For," said she, "our family worship has been one of my greatest enjoyments. I should like to join once more with all my household in this act; and if I leave it to another day, it may not be practicable." Not long after, the minister entered the room; to whom, after the customary inquiries were answered, the proposal of Theodosia was mentioned: he was pleased with it.

In a little time all were ready. Every domestic was admitted into the chamber. The servants were arranged at some distance from the bed, but in sight of Theodosia, who was raised by pillows, supported by two of her children. The minister began by reading a portion of the 14th chapter of St. John's Gospel; to which he added a few reflections, calculated to infuse into the minds of this little congregation a desire to "die the death of the righteous." They were preparing to conclude with a prayer, when they were desired by Theodosia still to keep their seats. "Sir," said she, addressing herself to the minister, "will you permit me to interrupt you for a few moments, while I declare, in the hearing of my family, my faith in that Redeemer whom you have preached unto us?"

He desired her to proceed.

"The testimony of a dying woman," continued she, "ought to have some weight with those who hear it. I here then declare, that nothing supports me in the prospect

of eternity, but faith in a crucified Saviour. On him alone I depend for salvation. On the merits of my Redeemer I ground all my hope of future happiness. And this I declare in presence of my husband, children, and servants, that they may remember that what I professed through life, I rejoiced in in death. Blessed Redeemer! accept my grateful acknowledgments of that love which led thee to die for me; and fit me to enter that society of glorified saints, who to eternity shall ascribe their salvation to 'him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood!' Lord, I wait for thy salvation!"

The minister then kneeled down and prayed, and thus concluded the last act of family devotion in which Theodosia joined: he then retired. The servants were preparing to withdraw, but were desired to stay. Theodosia thought that an admonition from her, in present circumstances, might impress their minds, and be long remembered. She was unwilling that the opportunity should be lost, but there was a native modesty in her which always led her to make towards her point by delicate approaches. She chose, therefore, to cover her intention, which she did by calling first one and then another of her servants to her bedside, and making those kind inquiries about their health which were natural, as her illness had prevented her seeing them for some time. When she had thus gone round with her inquiries, she began to speak of her own case. She told them of her supports, of the goodness of God, and the blessedness of religion. She admonished them in the most affectionate terms, not to neglect religion, nor to be inattentive to the instructions of their affectionate minister, to whose zeal, humility, and benevolence, she bore witness. She encouraged them to seek the kingdom of God, by referring them to that composure which they now saw in her, who knew not whether she had a day to live. "Thus peaceful," said she, "will you be in the last hour, if you make it the main business of life to know and serve God. We may not all meet together again here; but be followers of Christ, and we shall meet around his throne in heaven."

To this tender address none of them were able to make any reply. With respectful and affectionate silence some of them approached to kiss her hand. Others were obliged to quit the room immediately, in order to give vent to their feelings. And all gave proof of having heard her with the deepest impression. Of the scene which followed no description shall be attempted, it being impossible for me to represent it justly; this was her giving a parting charge to her children.

The anguish endured on this occasion was unquestionably great; yet let it be remembered, that although the survivors of Theodosia suffered much in being obliged to separate from her, the supports of Christianity were felt. They knew that there was a possibility of their meeting again; and they derived comfort from what they had been taught, namely, that a far more happy interview awaited them, if they followed her "who, through faith and patience, inherited the promises."

These are the felicities of married life, where Christian piety is combined with natural attachment. In such instances we see something of Eden restored. How great and how lovely the contrast to the wretched family of an irreligious pair, is that where the members live together in peace and love, delighting in God, and in the society of each other; worshipping his name, regarding his word, attending regularly on his ordinances, discharging their several duties, bearing each other's burdens, and, when death makes a separation, quitting each other in the hope of being reunited in a better world, never to know a parting there.

Such was the family of Evander and Theodosia. Like them, may you rule your house in the fear of God! Thus will you be "lovely and pleasant in your lives, and in death not divided." Thus will you be happy in yourselves, comforts to each other, patterns to your neighbors, and witnesses to the excellency of that holy estate, in which the hands of the first human pair were joined by their Creator.

POOR JOSEPH.

AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE.

A POOR unlearned man, named Joseph, whose employment was to go on errands and carry parcels, passing through London streets one day, heard psalm-singing in the house of God, and went in, having a large parcel of yarn hanging over his shoulders. It was Dr. Calamy's church, St. Mary's, Aldermanbury. A well-dressed congregation surrounded the doctor. He read his text from 1 Tim. 1 : 15. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." From this he preached, in the clearest manner, the ancient and apostolic Gospel, the contents of this faithful saying, that there is eternal salvation for the vilest sinners, only through the worthiness of Jesus Christ, the God that made all things. Not many rich, not many noble are called by this doctrine, says the apostle; "but God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the things that are mighty."

While the gay and thoughtless part of the congregation listlessly heard this glorious truth—and, if they were struck with any thing, it was only with some fine expression or

well-turned sentence that the doctor uttered—Joseph, in rags, gazing with astonishment, never took his eyes from the preacher, but drank in with eagerness all he said; and trudging homeward, he was heard thus speaking with himself: "Joseph never heard this before; Jesus Christ, the God who made all things, came into the world to save sinners like Joseph; and this is true; and it is a 'faithful saying.'"

Not long after this, Joseph was seized with a fever, and was dangerously ill. As he tossed upon his bed his constant language was, "Joseph is the chief of sinners; but Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and Joseph loves him for this." His neighbors who came to see him, wondered, on hearing him always dwell on this, and only this. Some of the religious sort addressed him in the following manner: "But what say you of your own heart, Joseph? Is there no token of good about it? No saving change there? Have you closed with Christ, by acting faith upon him?" "Ah, no," says he, "Joseph can act nothing—Joseph has nothing to say for himself but that he is the chief of sinners; yet, seeing that it is a 'faithful saying,' that Jesus, he who made all things, came into the world to save sinners, why may not Joseph, after all, be saved?"

One man, finding out where he heard this doctrine, on which he dwelt so continually and with such delight, went and asked Dr. Calamy to come and visit him. He came, but Joseph was now very weak, and had not spoken for some time, and though told of the doctor's arrival, he took no notice of him; but when the doctor began to speak to him, as soon as he heard the sound of his voice, he instantly sprang upon his elbow, and seizing him by his hand exclaimed as loud as he could with his now feeble and trembling voice, "O, sir, you are the friend of the Lord Jesus whom I heard speak so well of him. Joseph is the chief of sinners; but it is a 'faithful saying,' that Jesus Christ, the God who made all things, came into the world to save sinners, and why not Joseph? Oh! pray to that Jesus for me, pray that he may save me: tell him that Joseph thinks that he loves him for coming into the world to save such sinners as Joseph."

The doctor prayed: when he concluded, Joseph thanked him most kindly; he then put his hand under his pillow and took out an old rag, in which were tied up five guineas,

and putting it into the doctor's hand, (which he had kept all this while close in his,) he thus addressed him: "Joseph, in his folly, had laid this up to keep him in his old age; but Joseph will never see old age: take it, and divide it amongst the poor friends of the Lord Jesus; and tell them that Joseph gave it them for His sake who came into the world to save sinners, of whom he is the chief." So saying, he reclined his head. His exertions in talking had been too much for him, so that he instantly expired.

Dr. Calamy left this scene, but not without shedding tears over Joseph; and used to tell this little story with much feeling, and as one of the most affecting occurrences he ever met with. It naturally suggests the following observations:

1. Let us admire the power of Divine grace. The whole congregation, whether rich or poor, were sinners in the sight of the holy God, and stood equally in need of that salvation which by the Gospel was preached to them. But while the thoughtless assembly heard it with inattention, the word of God came with "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" to the heart of Joseph, and fixed his attention to its infinite importance. To what can we ascribe this difference, but to the free grace of him who "hath hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes, and hath chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"

To display the riches of this grace, the apostle tells us that God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, for the express purpose that no flesh should glory in his presence, but that he that glorieth should glory *only in the Lord*. This is very different from the general views of men. There is a proneness in men, when convicted of sin, to go about to establish a righteousness of their own, not submitting to the righteousness of God; while others endeavor, by their own exertions, to make their hearts better, and so prepare them for the reception of Christ. Joseph had no idea of such a way of salvation. When asked about his heart, if there was no token for good about it, no saving change there, "Ah," said he, "Joseph has nothing to say for himself, but just that he

is the chief of sinners; but 'it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.'"

2. The Gospel, when received, produces love to God and to his people. Joseph had received the word, not as the word of men, but—as it is in truth—the word of God, and it wrought effectually in his believing it. He experienced the truth of the apostle's assertion, "We love him because he first loved us." "Oh, pray," said he, "to that Jesus for me; pray that he may save me! Tell him that Joseph thinks that he loves him for coming into the world to save such poor sinners as Joseph." It was a sense of the love of Christ manifested in saving sinners, that first attracted his attention, drew forth his warmest affections, and occupied all his thoughts. A sense of the love of Christ shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, always produces love, and this is shown by universal obedience to the will of God, and studying to adorn the doctrine of God by a life and conversation becoming the Gospel. Joseph could not now manifest his love to God in this way, but he does it by showing love to his people, and that *because* they were the friends of Jesus. When he heard Dr. Calamy's voice, he exclaimed, "O, sir! you are the friend of the Lord Jesus whom I heard speak so well of him, *and whom I love for what you said of him;*" and to this profession of love he added a substantial proof, in giving to the poor friends of Jesus all he possessed in the world.

3. The Gospel is sufficient to support the mind in the immediate prospect of death. Joseph did not comfort himself with the thought that he was no worse than his neighbors, and therefore, as God was merciful, he would be safe enough. The atonement of Christ was the only ground of his hope and confidence, in the view of death, judgment, and eternity. Being justified by faith, he had peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoiced in the hope of the glory of God.

It is appointed unto men once to die, but after death the judgment. Think of this, ye that forget God. Remember that your breath is in your nostrils, and perhaps this night your soul may be required of you. Be entreated to consider your ways, and flee for refuge to the hope set before you in the Gospel.

No. 69.

RELIGION OF THE CLOSET.

BY REV. JAMES BENNETT, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF ROTHERHAM COLLEGE, ENGLAND.

MATTHEW 6: 6.

WHEN THOU PRAYEST, ENTER INTO THY CLOSET, AND WHEN THOU HAST SHUT THY DOOR, PRAY TO THY FATHER WHO IS IN SECRET; AND THY FATHER, WHO SEETH IN SECRET, SHALL REWARD THEE OPENLY.

IN unfolding to the mind, and enforcing on the conscience "this command of our Saviour," you will expect no novelties. The subject would be profaned, were it treated in any other way, than with the holy seriousness and devout affections which we should cultivate in the closet. But will it, therefore, be deficient in interest? We may be more struck with the glory of *public* worship; but let us never forget that the secret devotion of the closet is so essential to the life of our public services, that without it the most specious appearances are but splendid hypocrisy. May I not then hope for your serious attention, while I attempt to describe the duties of the closet, to direct to their suitable discharge, and to urge the motives which should enforce your attention?

I. TO DESCRIBE THE DUTY, a formal definition is not necessary. Who needs to be informed that it consists in the secret worship of the Christian, transacted between God and himself alone, whether in a private room or some retired

spot in the open air? I design to point out the various exercises, in which we may so spend our devotional hours as most effectually to attain their end: the divine glory, and our own edification.

1. I mention *secret prayer*, on account of its primary importance, and because it is that which our Lord expressly enjoins in the text. "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet." Though united public prayer is enjoined in Scripture, yet, when we design our own individual devotion, Christ brands it with a mark of hypocrisy, to pray in public places of worship, as Jewish Pharisees in their synagogues, or modern Catholics in their churches, which are kept open for this purpose. This part of religion demands the privacy of a closet. When withdrawn from every creature, we feel most deeply penetrated with awe of His presence "who seeth in secret;" and having no one else to regard, we make the solemn reflection, "Thou, God, seest me." The spirit adjusts her posture, her dispositions, her expressions, to draw near, with acceptance and profit, to Him whose presence fills the place. The absence of every human witness emboldens us to throw off all restraint which would prevent the freedom of our address to God, and invites us to "pour out our hearts before him." There each one can enter into his own particular case; and where is the genuine Christian who has not some important concern to transact with God, which he could not express before any creature, however near and intimate?

As deceit lies in generals, the sincerely pious wish to enter minutely into all their sins, infirmities, wants, and woes. But whom could we entrust with this unreserved confession, but him to whose eye our hearts are opened? In the closet, the numerous class of Christians who com-

plain of being destitute of the gift of prayer, females and young persons, may call upon God, unencumbered with the shackles of a form of prayer. Here the spontaneous language of an overflowing heart offends no one's ear, however ungrammatical. Now we feel no propensity to quench the emotions of the Spirit, conscious that "He who searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God." In this hidden sanctuary we may perform that secret, solemn act of personal devotion, the surrender of ourselves to God, and the consecration of our hearts to him, in an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten.

But, though the closet is devoted to personal religion, shall we hence infer that we must there be selfish? In the pattern of prayer which our Lord immediately subjoins to the text, he teaches us to say, "Thy kingdom come." When Paul informs us of the request which he offered for the *church* night and day, does he not point out to us one important part of his secret prayers? Imitate him in this, brethren. When withdrawn from the eye of your fellow-worshippers, prove the sincerity of your love to Zion, by pouring out your prayers for her prosperity; vindicate your public spirit from the suspicion of being an ostentatious glare to catch the eye; approve it to God and your own conscience a divine and holy flame, which burns more pure and bright when removed from human applause. Nor forget to intercede for your minister, "that utterance may be given him," who is perhaps at the same moment in his closet praying for you. Here also we may intercede for our relatives, a husband for a wife, a child for an unregenerate parent, in terms expressive of their condition, which might be highly improper in the hearing of any human wit-

ness. These secret supplications indulge the best feelings of our hearts, and give full scope to our sacred passions, which the presence even of a child would forbid.

2. Let the *study of the sacred Scriptures* form a part of your secret worship. I take it for granted that all the works of pious, though uninspired men, may be profitably introduced into the closet, provided they occupy not too much room there; but the Bible is peculiarly the Christian's closet companion. In the secret presence of God, open the holy book; and, on your knees, "ask counsel at the mouth of the Lord," saying, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." But never forget Philip's question: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" Be not content with reading a certain portion of the divine words, as though they were to operate mystically. "The Gospel," saith Jerome, "lies in the sense, not in the sound of the words of Scripture." Never bring to the Bible a meaning, which you or others may have previously imposed; but seek "to know what is the mind of the Spirit."

But is this all? Should we seek to know, merely that we may know? The Scriptures teach "doctrines according to godliness, to make us wise unto salvation, to sanctify and cleanse us by the washing of water." Hence, we should read them with devout application. "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" "Perform thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope!" Thus should we yield to the Bible its due honors. For think you the word of God was given merely to lie in a parlor with a newspaper, or in a study with books of science? No; in the most holy recess, where all other books must lie at the threshold, we should consult those "lively oracles of God," as the high priest in the holy of holies

asked counsel of "him, that dwelt between the cherubim." Ah, how differently would the Scriptures be understood and employed, were they thus studied in their own spirit!

3. *Devout meditation* is a duty of the closet. This is repeatedly inculcated in Scripture. "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at even-tide." "Thou shalt meditate in these things day and night." The retirement which this exercise demands, naturally conducts us to the closet; though we may perhaps find that Isaac chose the best place and time, the open air, and the stillness of the evening. What numerous, various, and impressive subjects there offer themselves to our meditation! "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;" Lord, "what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" that thy Son should become the Son of man, thus made, a little while, lower than the angels, for the suffering of death; thou "hast crowned him with glory and honor, and put all things in subjection under his feet!" How much more just and impressive views should we have of many parts of Scripture, and of every important subject, were we thus to meditate on them in our devout retirement! How differently would our most perplexing prospects appear, how much easier would our most difficult duties become, did we contemplate them in the blaze of the divine presence! Viewed in this light, on the blackest cloud we should behold a rainbow.

4. *Self-examination* should attend our secret worship. Observe, with what vehemence Paul urges this duty. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" This indeed should be interwoven with all our reading of the Scriptures

and hearing of the Gospel; but fully to attain its end, we must apply ourselves exclusively to this subject. In the silence and solemnity of the closet we should commune with our own hearts and try our ways. Could Seneca, a heathen, say, "At night, when the light is removed, and all is hushed and still, I make a scrutiny into the day, and hide nothing from myself;" and shall Christians neglect this scrutiny? O "tell it not in Gath!" When God and you are alone, anxiously inquire whether you have found favor in his sight. Say to him, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart." The Scriptures contain the marks of grace. The first epistle of John was given for this purpose, "that you might know whether you have eternal life;" and would it not assist you in the solemn inquiry, to have these marks collected together and written down before you?

But if you have satisfactorily decided this momentous question, and need not daily to repeat the inquiry concerning your state; should you not constantly examine your frame and walk before God? As short reckonings are best with such faithless servants as our deceitful hearts, let us every evening ask, Have I walked in the fear of God all the day? Have I neglected any express duty, or committed any particular sin this day? As I am nearer eternity, am I nearer to God and heaven this evening, than in the morning? Such inquiries should be more full and solemn on special occasions, as before the Lord's Supper. "Let a man examine himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

II. Directions for the SUITABLE DISCHARGE of the duties of the closet. The proper place, time, method, and spirit of secret worship require attention.

1. The *place* Christ here calls your closet. It is observable that the Greek word may signify, not only closet, but chamber, wardrobe, or warehouse; and some suppose that our Lord designedly employed a word of such latitude, that none might omit secret prayer, under pretence that they had not a proper place in which to retire. What circumstances can give exemption from this duty? Where people have but one room, they might literally retire into a *closet*, if it have a door which would shut them in from the rest of the family. Or, if they want even this convenience, a curtain, drawn across one corner of the room, may suffice. Or we may imitate Christ's example, who withdrew for private devotion to a garden, a field, a mountain. But surely, every real Christian, who by the kind providence of God has it in his power, will provide himself an oratory, a closet, a place sacred to retirement and devotion. This should be as secret as possible. It was not without design, that Christ said, "*When thou hast shut thy door*, pray to thy Father in secret." The more remote from all on earth, the nearer may be your approach to heaven.

2. The *time* of retirement should be duly regulated. Though we read in the New Testament that "Peter and John went up to the temple at the ninth hour, being the hour of prayer," this seems to have been in conformity to Jewish institutions; for it does not appear that the Gospel prescribes any canonical hours sacred to prayer. Should we not, however, fix some for ourselves? What is left to any time, is likely to be done at no time.

Must not all unite to consecrate their first hours in the *morning?* Hearken to David's vow: "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning; O Lord, in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." Ought we not to

serve the first and best of beings with our first and best moments? By retiring for prayer before breakfast, we at once secure the hour of which we might afterwards be deprived, and prepare our mind for all that awaits us, by communion with him,

"Whose morning smiles bless all the day."

Here Christ's bright example goes before us: for "he, rising up in the morning a great while before day, departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."

The same example teaches us to retire in the *evening*. Is not God worthy to be our Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of our days? Does not each day furnish us an errand to the throne of grace; to give thanks for the mercies we asked in the morning; and to seek pardon for the sins, which, alas, stain every day? Strain every nerve to retire to the closet before supper or drowsiness renders you unfit for devotion. "For if ye offer to me the lame or the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? saith the Lord of hosts."

The length of time to be spent in retirement, must depend greatly on each one's circumstances. Servants, who have not time at command, may not be able to enjoy so long an audience in the closet as their masters. Perhaps the medium most generally suitable is an hour at morning and at evening. Colonel Gardiner, even when most hurried, spent two hours in the oratory; though some may not be able to employ more than half an hour, and what Christian could endure less? He that knows its worth will not voluntarily abridge its length; and he that is much with God, is most likely to receive much from God.

Those who have it in their power, will find it highly to

their advantage, to devote, now and then, whole days to the closet, and to join to their ordinary exercise the Scriptural extraordinary duty of fasting. Thus Christ prepared for his public ministry; thus he spent a whole night before he sent forth his apostles. Our birthday, the new-year's day, and the anniversary of a minister's ordination, invite to special devotion. Might we not then say with David, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies?" Could we not then wind up our souls' accounts, and form plans for the ensuing year, through the whole of which the divine, holy, and delightful savor of these consecrated days might not evaporate?

3. The *method* in which we should conduct our secret worship must, in a great degree, depend on each one's experience and circumstances. Yet some order should be observed, that we may neither neglect any important object, nor protract our devotions to undue length; neither waste our time, nor throw our minds into confusion, by irregularity or indecision. Allow me to propose the following: At our entrance into the closet, we may either bow our knees in a short prayer, or raise ejaculations to God for divine aid. Then open the Scriptures; but not promiscuously, without order or design. If you read regularly through a book in the Old Testament one part of the day, and in the New the other, you come at once to your subject, and are most likely to discover the connection, scope, and meaning of the writer, which is the true mind of the Spirit in the Scriptures. What you have read will suggest hints for self-examination, which in its turn will furnish you subjects for prayer.

But should our prayers be without order, without design? The pattern of prayer which our Lord has given,

teaches us to ask for proper things in proper places. The orderly return of days and seasons invites us to regularity. We may appoint one day for thanksgiving, another for intercession in behalf of relatives, or those who request an interest in our prayers. Thus we may enter fully into every subject, without suffering one duty to defeat the claims of another. Rising from the throne of grace, we shall have frequent occasions to note down in our diary the history of our intercourse with God, and record those events to which we may in future look back, to slay our pride, cheer our hope, invigorate our faith, and raise our hearts in gratitude to Him who appeared at Bethel. If time yet remain, we may read the works of some pious author. One can scarcely conceive how many volumes may be read in a year, by devoting to it only a quarter of an hour every day.

4. The *spirit* of secret devotion is of the utmost importance. Without watchfulness, your time may be spent in the closet as unprofitably as anywhere. Here, Christian, you are in imminent danger. Your secret devotion is the main-spring of your profession. If formality and a worldly spirit intrude and reign in your closet; if you content yourself with stationing your body there an hour, though your thoughts rove to the end of the earth, the main-spring is broken. What then shall give vigor, motion, and direction to the machine? "Keep thy foot when thou goest into the oratory of God." Hearken to the voice which there says, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Say, "How dreadful is this place," for God is here! "The world," says a pious writer, "must not dare to tread the floor that is washed with tears of penitence; nor unhallowed thoughts to live in the air that is filled with sighs and prayers."

In this most holy sanctuary invite the presence of Christ, your great High Priest, who alone can make your person or offerings acceptable. Ask a supply of the Holy Spirit, that this living fire may kindle your sacrifice, and your spirit ascend with your offering to the skies. Let all the outward service go for nothing, till you draw near to God, even to his seat. Like Jacob, resolve to "wrestle all night till the day break;" saying, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." At least, if disappointed of this, return humbled, and mourning after the Lord. One of those days of special devotion which have been recommended, may restore you to your wonted joys.

III. The MOTIVES which enforce attention to the religion of the closet, are numerous and weighty. But I can mention only those four which are glanced at in the text. The worship of God in secret is the test of sincerity; a source of reward; the means of public excellence; and an imitation of the best examples.

1. The *test of sincerity*. This criterion is established by the Judge, "whose eyes are as a flame of fire;" who "searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins." "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray" in public places, where "they may be seen of men; but thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and pray to thy Father in secret." Must not your own judgment and conscience approve the test? Can a sincere Christian live without secret worship? What would be thought of a child who in public should pretend much deference for his parent; but in private should behave with coldness and neglect? Would not every person of discernment turn away disgusted at such hypocrisy? Judge then,

I pray, what must the Father of our spirits think of our public services and professions, if we neglect to worship him in the closet, where his eye alone can behold us?

When Job says, "Will he always call upon God?" he intimates that hypocrites are deficient in prayer; and Christ here extends the intimation farther, that they fail in *secret* prayer. Of so much importance is this, that we may safely say, he who never prays in secret, never prays at all. When expressing my hopes of a person who had been remarkably changed under the word, and from a profligate had become decent and attentive to public worship, I observed one of my friends silent. On being asked the reason, he replied, "I am afraid there is no saving change in him; for though diligent to attend on public means, I have reason to believe he does not pray in secret; and I cannot think that one who has felt the power of the Gospel, can neglect the closet." I was forced to assent to his views, participate in his fears, and watch with trembling anxiety the seeming convert. Too soon I saw the portentous suspicions confirmed; for "it happened to that man according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

But this is given only as a negative criterion of sincerity. The neglect of the closet will stamp us hypocrites; but attention to it will not as certainly prove us sincere. At least, it will only show that we are not the worst kind of hypocrites, who are designedly acting a deceitful part. We may still be deceived in our own character, which we must try by other marks, laid down in Scripture. Yet a regular, conscientious, cheerful performance of secret worship forms a strong presumption in our favor. In the closet

we honor the omnipresence and omniscience of God, and invite the scrutiny of his heart-searching eye. If, then, the performance affords a pleasing hope that we are "Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile," while the omission absolutely brands us with the odious name of hypocrite, who can dare neglect this essential duty?

2. The religion of the closet yields a *rich reward.* Time, spent in secret, is not thrown away; for "thy Father, who seeth in secret, himself will reward thee." "He is the bountiful rewarder of those who thus sincerely and diligently seek him." What though "the reward is of grace, and not of debt," is it less liberal for that? God testifies peculiar delight in the hidden worship of the closet; as a truly generous man retires from public view, to bestow his best favors in secret. If, then, this be his choice, should we not seek him "in his pavilion," "in the secret of his tabernacle?" "In keeping this command there is great reward." The very circumstance of being alone with God is to a Christian replete with honor and delight.

The pleasure which affects the heart with most lively touches, is the sense of being immediately under the eye of infinite Wisdom, Holiness, and Goodness, who will receive us graciously, and crown our imperfect religion here with happiness, large as our desires, and lasting as our souls. O, what delightful communion with his Saviour the believer enjoys, when, in the silence of the closet, "the still small voice" of Jesus sounds from the holy word! How freely he pours out his whole soul into the bosom of that God, who is to him a more intimate, unreserved confidant, than any creature! At his feet he lays down the burden, which no earthly friend could lift from his shoulders; and, like the patriarch, goes on his way with cheerful steps.

Were it lawful to intrude upon the secrecy of this holy place, and admit you to be witness to the Christian's private audience with Jehovah, what hidden glories would be unveiled! How much of heaven would be seen on earth! Listening to the midnight worship of Mr. Welch, an ignorant friar discovered such intercourse between God and man as overwhelmed him with astonishment, and transported him at once into a new world of views and feelings. What is the most beloved spot, where the memory of the righteous lingers with fondest delight? Ask Jacob. It is his Bethel, where he stood at the gate of heaven: his Peniel, where "he wrestled all night with God, saw him face to face, wept, made supplication, and prevailed." Ask the biographer of the departed Ashburner. It was at "the spring where he poured out his soul to God." Ask each Christian. It is the closet where he says, "I am left alone, and yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me." "I am never less alone, than when alone."

3. Secret worship is the means of *public excellence.* Thy Father will reward thee openly. It preserves from open shame, to which neglecters of this duty are exposed. It has been well observed, that apostasy begins at the closet. He, that dares neglect God in secret, because men cannot see this sin, may find that God dares punish him openly, and make men see his shame. But "he, that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." The man whose secret religion proves his single eye to the approbation of God, will often be surprised at the honors which God confers on him before men. Moses ascends the mount; see, the cloud covers him. Hear the cry of Israel: "As for this Moses, we know not what is become of him." After

forty days' concealment, see him return. Look how the sons of Israel turn away their eyes, dazzled with the glory of his countenance. They now know what had become of him; they see that he has conversed with God face to face on the mount; for the skin of his face shines with beams of glory, and they cannot endure to look upon him, till covered with a veil. I see the Christian return from his closet! We had missed him, and he tells no one where he has been; but his looks divulge the secret. I behold an air of heaven about him, a beam of glory playing on his countenance. I perceive something divine in his spirit, his temper, his conversation, his conduct. "The beauty of the Lord his God is upon him." I feel myself in company with a child of God; for he has been with "his Father in secret, and his Father has rewarded him openly." How often we see the religion of the closet openly rewarded in the unction which attends a minister in the pulpit, in the successful zeal which leads our public schemes of usefulness, and in the divine gifts and graces which enrich our meetings for prayer.

But, if we judge by the rule of reverse, what melancholy suspicions arise in our breasts, on beholding the spirit and conduct of some noisy professors! To maintain an honorable, edifying, public profession of religion, without the devotion of the closet, is more impossible than to guide the affairs of a great empire without a cabinet council. How shameful, then, to make public business an excuse for neglect of retirement, when the greater the pressure and publicity of affairs, the more imperiously they demand that exercise in which we derive grace to honor God openly! This holds still stronger, if our public employment be, to minister in the church of God. To slight the closet, in

order to prepare for the pulpit, is as if the high priest, in his haste to bless the people, had neglected to burn incense within the veil, and to sprinkle on the mercy-seat that blood which gives efficacy to his benediction. When our Lord found his time filled up in preaching and healing all the day, rather than neglect it, he "spent all night in prayer to God."

4. Secret worship is an imitation of the *best examples*. To pray in public only, is to "be as the Pharisees, hypocrites;" but to frequent the closet, is to resemble the sincere, "the excellent of the earth." At their head behold our Saviour, "who left us an example, that we should tread in his steps." You have seen him in the wilderness forty days; rising in the morning a great while before day; and spending the whole night in prayer. His devotional retirement in the garden was so constant, that Judas selected it as the surest place for his foul treason. But was it so well known that Christ was to be found there, and shall it be uncertain when and where we may pray to our Father in secret! David seems to have dwelt and delighted much in the closet. Many of his psalms are the expression of his private devotion. Elijah "retired into his chamber and shut his door," when he would pour out his soul to God. To Daniel his prophetic visions were vouchsafed at the close of his private humiliation and prayer. In the closet you imitate Peter, who was alone at worship when sent for to open the door of faith to the Gentiles. You imitate Cornelius, who was "rewarded openly" by a visit from an angel and an apostle. You tread in the steps of Paul, who was known to be changed from a persecutor to a believer by this sign, "Behold, he prayeth." In the same secret path have walked all the saints of God from the beginning

to this day. "Go, and do thou likewise." Be ye imitators of those who have proved the place of secret prayer the antechamber to the palace of eternal praise.

Those who, under a profession of religion, spend their days in constant neglect of secret worship, are awful characters; of whom it is difficult to speak in terms of sufficient reprobation and alarm. You have heard the Redeemer pronounce you hypocrites. Your fellow-creatures dare not affix this odious brand on particular persons; because we often cannot tell whether professors pray in secret or not. But the open conduct of many excites suspicions and alarms. Remember, however, Christ knows, and at the day of judgment we all shall know. What will then be your confusion, to be unmasked before an assembled world! To hear the Judge say, "Depart from me, thou hypocrite; thou hast worshipped me only before men, to be seen of them; therefore thou hast received thy reward. Thou hast so far served me as would promote thy credit among men, and hast had thy heaven in thy reputation. The silent, unostentatious religion of the closet, which would procure thee no applause, had for thee no charms; then what wouldst thou do in a heaven, where thou wouldst not be an object of admiration, but 'God will be all in all?' Depart from me, and take thy portion with hypocrites and unbelievers."

Consider, I earnestly beseech you, how could you bear such a reception at the great day? After having associated with "the sons of Zion," to be "put away with the wicked of the earth, as dross." To hear the profligate say, "Art thou also become like unto us? Who would have thought of seeing you in this place of torment? Well, I have not the damnation of a hypocrite. But there goes a man that looked as much like a Christian as any one I saw on earth,

and now has as much of perdition as any one I see in hell." Think, then, while in your shop, your parlor, your bed, or at the card-table, the tavern, the theatre, when Christians are in their closets, how you can possibly pretend to rank with those who "delight themselves in the Lord." Ask how you could endure to be in the immediate presence of God through eternity, when you shun to be an hour alone with him on earth. Entreat him to pardon your hypocrisy, to "give you a new heart and right spirit," "that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."

Children of God and of prayer, suffer the word of exhortation. Though aware of the vast importance of the subject, must we not all confess that we here stand reproved? May we not trace to our neglect of the closet the cause of those incessant complaints, "My leanness! my leanness!" Are we not often guilty of immerging into such a multiplicity of worldly business, as leaves us no time for God? With just emphasis the devout Heywood exclaimed, "Cursed be those occasions which eat out religion." For shall we voluntarily entail upon ourselves the curse of Korah? Shall it be said of us, "The *earth* swallowed them up?"

But you plead that, if you are not so much in your closet as you should be, your circumstances, station, and duties in life, deny you time. But might you not imitate David, by redeeming time from sleep, to spend it in the closet? If laboring men, going to work early, cannot enjoy more than a quarter of an hour in the morning, might they not secure half an hour at evening?

But I hear others complain, "We are frequently deterred from entering our closet by guilt upon our consience, or the prevalence of some unhappy frame and spirit." What, then, is forsaking the throne of grace a remedy for a guilty

conscience, or a worldly frame? Have you not observed in the psalms, how often David began dull and dejected, but ended cheerful and triumphant? Follow this track: apply to the same "fountain that was opened for the house of David;" and let "the harp of the son of Jesse drive away the evil spirit."

There yet remain some who say, "We are often inclined to abandon our closet, because we are there habitually uncomfortable, lifeless, and haunted with sore temptations." Beware how you imitate those who complain, "It is in vain to serve God." Let not your comforts be your chief object of pursuit; for if they are, they will flee from you, like your shadow. If you are deprived of consolation by want of more evangelical views of the way of salvation, in secret study of the Gospel, and prayer for the "spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ," lies your remedy. As to the temptations which there assault you, is it not a convincing proof that secret devotion is excellent in itself, and profitable for you, when so bad a spirit, and your sworn enemy, levels against it all his craft and malevolence? Imitate "the Captain of your salvation," who suffered not the tempter to drive him from his retirement; but displayed the fruits of his retirement by the flight of the tempter.

But if nothing should induce us to abandon, neither should any thing be suffered to interrupt the regularity of our secret worship. May we not in a great degree obviate the evil occasioned by journeys and visits? When at the house of a Christian friend, why should we not ask for a room to retire in? Or why not offer it to our visitors; saying, "It is my stated time; you will excuse me for half an hour; there is a room, with a Bible, to which you may withdraw?" After such a retreat, with how much higher

and more improving relish should we return to the circle of friendship.

Finally, "Pray without ceasing." The day hastens, when your prayers, which have lain buried in obscurity, will, as well as your bodies, receive a joyful resurrection. "Your Father, who hath seen you in secret, will reward you openly," before the assembled universe. The glories of that reward set language at defiance. "*The Lord shall come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will manifest the counsels of the heart; and then shall every man have praise of God.*"

SECRET DEVOTION.

To Thee, before the dawning light,
My gracious God, I pray;
I meditate thy name by night,
And keep thy law by day.

My spirit faints to see thy grace,
Thy promise bears me up;
And while salvation long delays,
Thy word supports my hope.

Seven times a day I lift my hands,
And pay my thanks to thee:
Thy righteous providence demands
Repeated praise from me.

When midnight darkness veils the skies,
I call thy works to mind;
My thoughts in warm devotion rise,
And sweet acceptance find.

Thou hast inclined this heart of mine
Thy statutes to fulfil;
And thus, till mortal life shall end,
Would I perform thy will.

No. 70.

DOCTRINES AND DUTIES

OF

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

STATED IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE BIBLE.

GOD, who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these lest days spoken unto us by his Son. Heb. 1:1, 2. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip: for if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just rec-

ompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Heb. 2:1–4. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

OF GOD.

God is a Spirit. John 4:24. God is love. 1 John, 4:16. God is light. 1 John, 1:5. Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. Isaiah 40:12–15. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand; and there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. Hab. 3:3–6. O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me; thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thoughts afar off; thou

compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit; or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there: if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me: if I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me: yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. Psa. 139: 1–12. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who wast, and art, and art to come. Rev. 4: 8. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. Rev. 15: 4. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne; mercy and truth shall go before thy face. Psa. 89: 14. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Rev. 15: 3. The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation. Exod. 34: 6, 7. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; for by grace are ye saved. Eph. 2: 4, 5. There are three that bear record in heaven, the

Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. 1 John, 5: 7. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Matt. 28: 19. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen. 2 Cor. 13: 14.

OF PROVIDENCE.

Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are his. He changeth the times and seasons; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings; he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding; he revealeth the deep and secret things; he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. Dan. 2: 20–22. Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls. And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow; they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? Luke 12: 24–28. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. Acts 14: 17. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Matt. 10: 29, 30.

OF THE LAW OF GOD.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Matt. 22: 37–40. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Rom. 7: 12. Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all: for he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. James 2: 10, 11. Now we know, that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God: therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Rom. 3: 19, 20.

OF THE FALL OF MAN.

God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: and God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good. Gen. 1: 27, 31. Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions. Eccl. 7: 29. The Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. Gen. 2: 16, 17. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. Gen.

3 : 6. Wherefore by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Rom. 5 : 12. As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God; they are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one; their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Rom. 3 : 10–18.

OF THE DIGNITY AND OFFICES OF JESUS CHRIST.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made, that was made. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1 : 1–3, 14. For God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Heb. 1 : 1–3. Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the

likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Phil. 2: 6–8.

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A *Prophet* shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me: him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Acts 3: 22, 23. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, saith Jesus, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Luke 4: 18, 19.

The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent: Thou art a *Priest* for ever, after the order of Melchisedec. Ps. 110: 4. For such a *High Priest* became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. Heb. 7: 26. Having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Heb. 10: 21, 22.

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the *throne* of his father David. Luke 1: 32. Jesus said, My *kingdom* is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a *King*, then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King; to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth; every one that is of the truth,

heareth my voice. John 18 : 36, 37. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a *Prince* and a *Saviour*, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. Acts 5 : 31. For he must *reign* till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 1 Cor. 15 : 25. The grace of our *Lord* Jesus Christ be with you all. Rev. 22 : 21. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Rev. 2 : 10.

OF THE CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST.

For such a High Priest became us, who is *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.* Heb. 7 : 26. Having gone up to Jerusalem at twelve years of age, he was found in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions : and to his mother, who said to him, Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing, he replied, How is it that ye sought me ? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ? Luke 2 : 41–49. Jesus said unto his disciples, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. John 4 : 34. I seek not my own will, but the will of him that sent me. John 5 : 30. To John the Baptist he said, It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Matt. 3 : 15. And, in the morning, Jesus, rising up a great while before day, went out into a solitary place, *and there prayed.* Mark 1 : 35. Jesus, *as his custom was,* went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Luke 4 : 16.

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ; *nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* Matt. 26 : 39. On the cross he prayed for those who crucified him, saying, *Father, forgive them,* for they know not

what they do. Luke 23 : 34. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;* and having thus said, he gave up the ghost. Luke 23: 46. Peter said to the Jews, Ye denied the *Holy One and the Just*, and desired a murderer to be granted to you. Acts 3.: 14.

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; *who went about doing good.* Acts 10: 38. He himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. Matt. 8 : 17. Come unto me, said Jesus, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, *and I will give you rest.* Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am *meek* and *lowly in heart;* and ye shall find rest unto your souls. Matt. 11 : 28, 29. *I have compassion* on the multitude: I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way; and he wrought a miracle to supply them. Matt. 15 : 32. The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Luke 9: 56. A new commandment I give unto you, saith Jesus to his disciples, that ye love one another: *as I have loved you*, that ye also love one another. John 13 : 34. At the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus *wept.* Then said the Jews, Behold, how he loved him. John 11: 36. Then were brought unto Jesus little children, that he should put his hands on them and pray. And the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, *Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me;* for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Matt. 19 : 13, 14. Jesus said to his disciples, Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; *be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.* Matt. 10 : 16. Christ also suffered for us, *leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps:* who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. 1 Pet. 2 : 21–23.

OF THE ATONEMENT.

After threescore and two weeks shall *Messiah* be cut off, *but not for himself*. Dan. 9 : 26. For he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isa. 53 : 5, 6. He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. 2 Cor. 5 : 21. Jesus Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. Eph. 5 : 2. Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God. 1 Pet. 1 : 18–21. Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Rev. 1 : 5, 6. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. Rev. 5 : 12.

OF REPENTANCE.

Repent ye, and believe the Gospel. Mark 1 : 15. Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Acts 11 : 38. Christ

came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Matt. 9 : 13. Him hath God exalted, to give repentance and remission of sins. Acts 5 : 31. Now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me, with all your heart, with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. Joel 2 : 12. Return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Hosea 14 : 1. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Isa. 55 : 7. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die? Ezek. 33 : 11. Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy. Prov. 28 : 13. Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death. 2 Cor. 7 : 10. Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance. Matt. 3 : 8.

OF REGENERATION.

A *new heart* will I give you, saith God, and a *new spirit* will I put within you; and I will take away the *stony heart* out of your flesh, and I will give you a *heart of flesh*. Ezek. 36 : 26. There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do the miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man *be born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God. John 3 : 1–3. But as many as receive Jesus, to them giveth he power to become the *sons of God*, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1 : 12, 13. Being *born again*, not of corruptible seed,

but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 1 Peter, 1 : 23. Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 1 John 5 : 4.

OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength : even to him shall men come ; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory. Isa. 45 : 24, 25. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets ; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all that believe ; for there is no difference ; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God : being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God : to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting, then ? It is excluded. By what law ? of works ? Nay, but by the law of faith ; therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Rom. 3 : 21–28. Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt ; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Rom. 4 : 4, 5. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law ; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. Gal. 2 : 16. Yea, doubtless, and I count

all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. Phil. 3: 8, 9.

OF SANCTIFICATION.

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are *sanctified*, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Cor. 6: 9–11. Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and *purify* unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Titus 2: 14. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Gal. 5: 22–25. Sanctify them through thy truth, saith Jesus; thy word is truth. John 17: 17. Follow peace with all men, and *holiness*, without which no man shall see the Lord. Heb. 12: 14.

OF THE SOCIAL DUTIES.

Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's. Exod. 20: 12–17. Let love be without dissimulation; abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another; not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer, distributing to the necessity of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one towards another; mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil; provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord; therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Rom. 12: 9–21. And whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not

unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong, shall receive for the wrong that he hath done; and there is no respect of persons. Col. 3: 17–25. Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; the powers that be, are ordained of God. Rom. 13: 1.

OF THE PRIVILEGES OF REAL CHRISTIANS.

Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but we glory in tribulation also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Rom. 5: 1–5. There is therefore no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death. Rom. 8: 1, 2. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Rom. 14: 17. The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Prov. 4: 18. All things are yours, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. 1 Cor. 3: 21–23. We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. 1 Peter, 1: 5. Father, saith Jesus Christ, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. John 17: 24.

OF THE WORSHIP OF GOD.

I am the Lord thy God ; thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth ; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor serve them ; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me ; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain ; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Exod. 20 : 2–7. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. Psalm 84 : 1, 10. The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit ; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. John 4 : 23, 24. Jesus saith, I am the way, the truth, and the life ; no man cometh unto the *Father* but by *me*. John 14 : 6. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it unto you ; hitherto ye have asked nothing in *my name ;* ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. John 16 : 23, 24. Likewise the *Spirit* also helpeth our infirmities ; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought ; but the *Spirit* itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the heart, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession according to the will of God. Rom. 8 : 26, 27. I know Abraham, saith God, that he will command his *children* and his *household* after him, and they shall keep the way of the

Lord to do justice and judgment. Gen. 18: 19. Choose ye this day whom ye will serve: as for me and *my house*, we will serve the Lord. Jos. 24: 15. When thou *prayest*, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking: be not ye therefore like unto them; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. Matthew 6: 6–8.

OF THE LORD'S DAY.

Remember the *Sabbath day*, to keep it *holy*. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it. Exod. 20: 8–11. Ye shall keep my *Sabbaths*, and reverence my *sanctuary*: I am the Lord. Lev. 19: 30. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord. Isa. 58: 13, 14. Upon the *first* day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow. Acts 20: 7. I was in the Spirit, saith Saint John, on the Lord's day. Rev. 1: 10.

ON THE EFFECTS OF INFIDELITY AND IMMORALITY ON THE HAPPINESS OF NATIONS.

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters! they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Isa. 1: 2–4. If ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments, saith the Lord; and if ye despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, that ye break my covenant; I also will do this unto you: I will appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart; and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And if ye will not, for all this, hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass, and your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits. And if ye will not, for all this, hearken unto me, but walk contrary to me, I, even I, will chastise you seven times more for your sins. Lev. 26: 14–20, 27, 28. Therefore, also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even unto me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil: Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him? Joel 2: 12–14.

OF THE TRUTH, POWER, AND TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY.

We followed not cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation: for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. 2 Pet. 1:16–21. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Heb. 4:12. I am not ashamed, saith St. Paul, of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith. Rom. 1:16, 17. I saw another angel, saith St. John, fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell upon the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. Rev. 14:6, 7.

OF DEATH.

Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. His days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass. There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease; though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant; but *man* dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? Job 14: 1–10. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. Eccles. 12: 7. Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Rom. 5: 12. It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. Heb. 9: 27. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord *Jesus Christ!* 1 Cor. 15: 55–57. And I heard, saith St. John, a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them. Rev. 14: 13.

OF THE RESURRECTION.

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall *awake*, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting contempt. Dan. 12: 2. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good,

unto the *resurrection* of life; and they that have done evil, unto the *resurrection* of damnation. John 5: 28, 29. Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain: yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins; then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished: but now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. 1 Cor. 15: 12–20.

OF THE JUDGMENT.

We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 2 Cor. 5: 10. When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say also to them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. Matt. 25: 31–34,

41, 46. I saw a great white throne, saith St. John, and him that sat on it; from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works: and the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. Rev. 20: 11–13.

OF HELL.

On the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup, Psa. 11: 6; in hell, in the fire that never shall be quenched; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Mark 9: 43, 44. The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night. Rev. 14: 10, 11.

OF HEAVEN.

In my Father's house, saith Jesus Christ, are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. John 14: 2, 3. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were

dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, 2 Cor. 5: 1; an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven. 1 Pet. 1: 4. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any pain; for the former things are passed away, Rev. 21: 4; and there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads: and there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever: these sayings are faithful and true. And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Rev. 22: 3–6. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is: and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. 1 John, 3: 2, 3.

These are the true sayings of God. Rev. 19: 9. Receive them, therefore, not as the word of men, but as they are in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe. 1 Thess. 2: 13. Search the Scriptures, John 5: 39, which are able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus. 2 Tim. 3: 15. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven. Heb. 12: 25. Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, saith Christ, and of my words, of him shall

the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. Luke 9 : 26. I am not ashamed, saith St. Paul, of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Rom. 1 : 16. He who testifieth of these things saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Rev. 22 : 20, 21.

PRAYER FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT'S INFLUENCES.

Stay, thou insulted Spirit, stay,
Though I have done Thee such despite;
Nor cast the sinner quite away,
Nor take thine everlasting flight.

Though I have steeled my stubborn heart,
And still shook off my guilty fears,
And vexed and urged Thee to depart,
For many long, rebellious years;

Though I have most unfaithful been,
Of all who e'er thy grace received;
Ten thousand times thy goodness seen,
Ten thousand times thy goodness grieved;

Yet, O! the chief of sinners spare,
In honor of my great High Priest;
Nor in thy righteous anger swear
T' exclude me from thy people's rest.

This only woe I deprecate,
This only plague I pray remove;
Nor leave me in my lost estate,
Nor curse me with this want of love.

Now, Lord, my weary soul release,
Upraise me with thy gracious hand,
And guide into thy perfect peace,
And bring me to the promised land.

C. Wesley.

THE

BIBLE ABOVE ALL PRICE.

BY REV. EDWARD PAYSON, D. D.

MANY into whose hands this Tract may fall, entertain, I doubt not, a profound veneration for the Bible; and in their breasts it has its advocate, who pleads its cause far more powerfully and successfully than I can. To such persons nothing need be said in favor of a book, which not only affords them support and consolation under the troubles of life, but enables them to contemplate death with pleasure, and, to borrow its own language, makes them "wise unto salvation." If all were of this description, farther remarks would be needless.

But it is presumable that there are many who, through inattention to the subject, or from some other cause, have formed very inadequate conceptions of the worth of this volume; and who, consequently, do not feel the infinite importance of putting it into the hands of others. It is also notorious that even among such as profess to venerate the Scriptures, there are not a few who seem to regard them as deficient in those qualities which excite interest and attention. It may not be improper, therefore, to make a few remarks, with a design to show that, while the Scriptures are incalculably valuable and important, viewed as a revelation from heaven, they are also in a very high degree interesting and deserving of attention, CONSIDERED MERELY AS A HUMAN COMPOSITION.

Were we permitted to adduce the testimony of the Scriptures in their own favor, as a proof that their contents are highly interesting, our task would be short, and easily accomplished. But it is possible, that to this testimony some might think it a sufficient reply, to apostrophize the sacred volume in the language of the captious Jews to our Saviour: "Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true." No similar objection can be urged, however, against availing ourselves of the testimony which eminent uninspired men have borne in favor of the Scriptures.

From the almost innumerable testimonies of this nature which might easily be adduced, we shall select only that of Sir William Jones, a judge of the supreme court of judicature in Bengal: a man, says his learned biographer, who, by the exertion of rare intellectual talents, acquired a knowledge of arts, sciences, and languages, which has seldom been equalled, and scarcely, if ever, surpassed. "I have carefully and regularly perused the Scriptures," says this truly great man, "and am of opinion that this volume, independent of its divine origin, contains more sublimity, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains of eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever language they may have been written." How well he was qualified to make this remark, and how much it implied in his lips, may be inferred from the fact, that he was acquainted with twenty-eight different languages, and with the best works which had been published in most of them.

That a volume, which, in the opinion of such a man, is thus superior to all other books united, cannot be so uninteresting and insipid a composition as many seem to imagine, it must be needless to remark. That his commendation of it, though great and unqualified, is in no respect unmerited,

it would be easy, were it necessary, to prove, by appropriate quotations from the book which he so highly extols. But its morality will be more properly considered in a subsequent part of this treatise; and its unrivalled eloquence and sublimity are too obvious, and too generally acknowledged, to require illustration.

If any imagine that he has estimated too highly the *historical* information which this volume contains, we would only request them to peruse it with attention; and particularly to consider the assistance which it affords, in accounting for many otherwise inexplicable phenomena in the natural, political, and moral world. A person who has never attended to the subject, will, on recollection, be surprised to find for how large a portion of his knowledge he is indebted to this neglected book. It is the only book which satisfactorily accounts, or even professes to account, for the introduction of natural and moral evil into the world, and for the consequent present situation of mankind. To this book, also, we are indebted for all our knowledge of the progenitors of our race, and of the early ages of the world; for our acquaintance with the manners and customs of those ages; for the origin and explanation of many remarkable traditions which have extensively prevailed; and for almost every thing which is known of many once flourishing nations, especially of the Jews, the most singular and interesting people, perhaps, that ever existed.

It is the Bible alone, which, by informing us of the deluge, enables us to account satisfactorily for many surprising appearances in the internal structure of the earth, as well as for the existence of marine exuviæ on the summits of mountains, and in other places, far distant from the sea. By the same volume we are assisted in accounting for the

multiplicity of languages which exist in the world; for the degraded condition of the Africans; for the origin and universal prevalence of sacrifices; and for many other facts of an equally interesting nature. We shall only add, that, while the Scriptures throw light on the facts here alluded to, the existence of the facts powerfully tends, on the other hand, to establish the truth and authenticity of the Scriptures.

In addition to these intrinsic excellencies of the Bible, which give it, considered merely as a human production, powerful claims to the attention of persons of taste and learning, there are various circumstances of an adventitious nature, which render it peculiarly interesting to a reflecting mind.

Among these circumstances we may, perhaps not improperly, mention its great *antiquity*. Whatever may be said of its inspiration, some of the books which compose it are unquestionably the most ancient literary compositions extant, and perhaps the most ancient that ever were written; nor is it very improbable that letters were first employed in recording some parts of them, and that they were written in the language first spoken by man. It is also, not only the most ancient book, but the most ancient monument of human exertion, the oldest offspring of human intellect, now in existence. Unlike the other works of man, it inherits not his frailty. All the contemporaries of its infancy have long since perished, and are forgotten; yet this wonderful volume still survives. Like the fabled pillars of Seth, which are said to have bid defiance to the deluge, it has stood for ages, unmoved in the midst of that flood which sweeps away men with their labors into oblivion.

That these circumstances render it an interesting object of contemplation, it is needless to remark. Were there now in existence a tree which was planted, an edifice which

was erected, or any monument of human ingenuity, which was formed at that early period in which some parts of the Bible were written, would it not be contemplated with the keenest interest, carefully preserved, as a precious relic, and considered as something little less than sacred? With what emotions, then, will a thoughtful mind open the Bible, and what a train of interesting reflections is it in this view calculated to excite! While we contemplate its antiquity, exceeding that of every object around us, except the works of God, and view it in anticipation, as continuing to exist unaltered until the end of time, must we not feel almost irresistibly impelled to venerate it, as proceeding originally from Him, who is yesterday, to-day, and for ever the same; whose works, like his years, fail not?

The interest which this volume excites by its antiquity, will be greatly increased, if we consider the violent and persevering *opposition* it has encountered, and the almost innumerable enemies it has resisted and overcome. We contemplate, with no ordinary degree of interest, a rock which has braved for centuries the ocean's rage; practically saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." With still greater interest, though of a somewhat different kind, should we contemplate a fortress, which, during thousands of years, had been constantly assaulted by successive generations of enemies; around whose walls millions had perished; and, to overthrow which, the utmost efforts of human force and ingenuity had been exerted in vain. Such a rock, such a fortress, we contemplate in the Bible. For thousands of years this volume has withstood, not only the iron tooth of time, which devours men and their works together, but all the physical and intellectual strength of man.

Pretended friends have endeavored to corrupt and betray it; kings and princes have perseveringly sought to banish it from the world; the civil and military powers of the greatest empires have been leagued for its destruction; the fires of persecution have been often lighted, to consume it and its friends together; and, at many seasons, death in some horrid form has been the almost certain consequence of affording it an asylum from the fury of its enemies. It has also been almost incessantly assailed by weapons of a different kind, which, to any other book, would be far more dangerous than fire or sword. In these assaults, wit and ridicule have wasted all their shafts; misguided reason has been compelled, though reluctantly, to lend her aid, and, after repeated defeats, has again been dragged to the field; the arsenals of learning have been emptied, to arm her for the contest; and in search of means to prosecute it with success, recourse has been had, not only to remote ages and distant lands, but even to the bowels of the earth, and the region of the stars.

Yet still the object of all these attacks remains uninjured, while one army of its assailants after another has melted away. Though it has been ridiculed more bitterly, misrepresented more grossly, opposed more rancorously, and burnt more frequently, than any other book, and perhaps than all other books united, it is so far from sinking under the efforts of its enemies, that the probability of its surviving until the final consummation of all things, is now evidently much greater than ever. The rain has descended, the floods have come, the storm has arisen and beaten upon it; but it falls not, for it is founded upon a rock. Like the burning bush, it has ever been in the flames, yet it is still unconsumed; a sufficient proof, was there no other, that He, who dwelt in the bush, preserves the Bible.

If the opposition which this volume has successfully encountered, renders it an interesting object of contemplation; the *veneration* which has been paid to it, the use which has been made of it, and the benefits which have been derived from it by the wise and good in all ages, make it still more so. Who would not esteem it a most delightful privilege, to see and converse with a man who had lived through as many centuries as the Bible has existed; who had conversed with all the successive generations of men, and been intimately acquainted with their motives, characters, and conduct; who had been the chosen friend and companion of the wise and good in every age: the venerated monitor, to whose example and instructions the wise had ascribed their wisdom, and the virtuous their virtue? What could be more interesting than the sight, what more pleasing and instructive than the society of such a man? Yet such society we may in effect enjoy, whenever we choose to open the Bible.

In this volume we see the chosen companion, the most intimate friend of the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, and their pious contemporaries; the guide, whose directions they implicitly followed; the monitor, to whose faithful warnings and instructions they ascribed their wisdom, their virtues, and their happiness. In this volume we see the Book, in which the deliverer, the king, the sweet Psalmist of Israel delighted to meditate day and night; whose counsels made him wiser than all his teachers; and which he describes as sweeter than honey, and more precious than gold.

This, too, is the book, for the sake of which many a persecuted believer has forsaken his native land and taken up his dwelling in the wilderness; bringing it with him as his most valuable treasure, and at death bequeathing it to his posterity as the richest bequest in his power to make. From

this source, millions now in heaven have derived the strongest and purest consolation; and scarcely can we fix our attention on a single passage in this wonderful book, which has not afforded comfort or instruction to thousands, and been wet with tears of penitential sorrow or grateful joy drawn from eyes that will weep no more. There is probably not an individual in this Christian land, some of whose ancestors did not, while on earth, prize this volume more than life, and breathe many fervent prayers to heaven, that all their descendants, to the latest generation, might be induced to prize it in a similar manner. Thousands, too, have sealed their belief of its truth with their blood, rejoicing to shed it in defence of a book, which, while it led them to the stake, enabled them to triumph over its tortures.

Nor have its effects been confined to individuals. Nations have participated largely in its benefits. Armed with this volume, which is at once sword and shield, the first heralds of Christianity went forth conquering and to conquer. No less powerful than the wonder-working rod of Moses, its touch crumbled into dust the temples of paganism, and overthrew, as in a moment, the immense fabric of superstition and idolatry which had been for ages erecting. To this volume alone it is owing, that we do not assemble on our appointed days to offer our worship in the temple of an idol; that stocks and stones are not our deities; that cruelty, intemperance, and impurity do not constitute our religion; and that our children are not burnt, as sacrifices at the shrine of Moloch. To this volume we are also indebted for the reformation in the days of Luther; for the consequent revival and progress of learning; and for our present freedom from papal tyranny.

Nor are these benefits, great as they are, all which it

has been the means of conferring on man. Wherever it comes, blessings follow in its train. Like the stream, which diffuses itself, and is apparently lost among the herbage, it betrays its course by its effects. Wherever its influence is felt, temperance, industry, and contentment prevail; natural and moral evils are banished, or mitigated; and churches, hospitals, and asylums for almost every species of wretchedness arise, to adorn the landscape, and cheer the eye of benevolence. Such are the temporal benefits, which even infidelity itself, if it would for once be candid, must acknowledge that the Bible has bestowed on man. Almost coeval with the sun, its fittest emblem, it has, like that luminary, from the commencement of its existence, shed an unceasing flood of light on a benighted and wretched world. Who, then, can doubt that He, who formed the sun, gave the Bible to be "a light unto our feet, and a lamp to our path?" Who, that contemplates this fountain, still full and overflowing, notwithstanding the millions that have drunk of its waters, can doubt that it has a real, though invisible connection with that river of life, which flows for ever at the right hand of God?

Thus far we have considered the Bible as merely a human composition; though, as was unavoidable, some rays of divinity have, from time to time, burst through the cloud in which we vainly attempted to shroud it. But if it be in this view thus valuable and interesting, in what language shall we describe the importance it assumes, when viewed AS A REVELATION FROM GOD; as the book which has guided millions of immortal beings to heaven; as the book which must guide us there, if we ever reach those mansions of eternal day! That it is so, we shall not at present attempt to prove, but shall take it for granted; and proceed, without

delay, on the supposition that our readers believe, with the apostle, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

Viewed in this light, what finite mind can estimate its worth, or describe the attention and reverence with which it ought to be regarded? The ancient Greeks had one sentence, which they believed, though without foundation, to have descended from heaven; and to evince their gratitude and veneration for this gift, they caused it to be engraven, in letters of gold, on the front of their most sacred and magnificent temple. We, more favored, have not a sentence only, but a volume, which really descended from heaven; and which, whether we consider its contents or its Author, ought to be indelibly engraven on the heart of every child of Adam. Its Author is the Author of our being; and its contents afford us information of the most satisfactory and important kind, on subjects of infinite consequence, respecting which all other books are either silent, or speak only doubtfully and unauthoritatively. It informs us, with the greatest clearness and precision, of every thing necessary, either to our present or future happiness; of every thing, in fact, which its Author knows, the knowledge of which would be really useful to us; and thus confers those benefits which the tempter falsely pretended would result from eating the forbidden fruit—making us as gods, knowing good and evil.

In the fabulous records of pagan antiquity we read of a mirror, endowed with properties so rare, that by looking into it, its possessor could discover any object which he wished to see, however remote; and discover with equal ease persons and things above, below, behind, and before him. Such a mirror, but infinitely more valuable than this fictitious glass, do we really possess in the Bible. By employing this mirror in a proper manner, we may discern ob-

jects and events, past, present, and to come. Here we may contemplate the all-infolding circle of the Eternal Mind, and behold a most perfect portrait of Him, whom no mortal eye hath seen, drawn by his own unerring hand. Piercing into the deepest recesses of eternity, we may behold Him, existing independent and alone, previous to the first exertion of his creating energy. We may see heaven, the habitation of his holiness and glory, "dark with the excessive brightness" of his presence; and hell, the prison of his justice, with no other light than that which the fiery billows of his wrath cast, "pale and dreadful," serving only to render "darkness visible."

Here, too, we may witness the birth of the world which we inhabit; stand, as it were, by its cradle; and see it grow up from infancy to manhood, under the forming hand of its Creator. We may see light, at his summons, starting into existence, and discovering the world of waters without a shore. Controlled by His word, the waters subside, and islands and continents appear, not, as now, clothed with verdure and fertility, but sterile and naked as the sands of Arabia. Again he speaks, and the landscape appears, uniting the various beauties of spring, summer, and autumn, and extending farther than the eye can reach. Still, all is silent; not even the hum of the insect is heard; the stillness of death pervades creation; till, in an instant, songs burst from every grove; and the startled spectator, raising his eyes from the carpet at his feet, sees the air, the earth, and the sea, filled with life and activity, in a thousand various forms.

Here, too, we may contemplate the origin and infancy of our race; trace from its source to its termination that mighty river, of which we compose a part, and see it separating into two great branches; one of which flows back

in a circle, and loses itself in the fountain whence it arose; while the other rushes on impetuously in an opposite direction, and precipitates itself into a gulf, which has no bottom. In this glass we may also discover the fountain whence flow those torrents of vice and wretchedness which deluge the earth; trace the glorious plan of Divine Providence, running, like a stream of lightning, through the dark and stormy cloud of sublunary events; and see light and order breaking in upon the mighty chaos of crimes, revolutions, wars, and convulsions, which have ever distracted the world; and which, to a person unacquainted with the Scriptures, must ever appear to produce no beneficial effect, but to succeed each other without order, and to happen without design.

Here, too, we may contemplate ourselves in every conceivable situation and point of view; see our hearts laid open, and all their secret recesses displayed; trace, as on a map, the paths which lead to heaven and to hell; ascertain in which we are walking; and learn what we have been, what we are, and what we shall be hereafter.

Above all, we may here see displayed to view that wonderful scheme for the redemption of self-destroyed man, into which "angels desire to look;" and without which the knowledge of God, and of ourselves, would serve only to plunge us in the depths of despair. We may behold Him, whom we had previously seen creating the world, lying, as a helpless infant, in the manger, expiring in agonies on the cross, and imprisoned in the tomb. We may see him rising, ascending to heaven, sitting down "at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high," and there swaying the sceptre of universal empire, and ever living to make intercession for his people. Finally, we may see him coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to

judge the world. We may see the dead, at his command, rising from their graves; standing in awful silence and suspense before his tribunal; and successively advancing, to receive from his lips the sentence, which will confer on each of them an eternal weight of glory, or consign them for ever to the mansions of despair.

Such are the scenes and objects which the Scriptures place before us; such the information which they afford. Who will deny that this information is important; or that it is such as we might naturally expect to find in a revelation from God?

Equally important to the present and future happiness of man are the *precepts* which the Scriptures inculcate. With the greatest clearness and precision, and with an authority to which no other book can pretend, they teach us our duty with respect to God, our fellow-creatures, and ourselves. That spiritual kingdom, whose laws they promulgate, consists in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" and were these laws universally obeyed, nothing but righteousness, peace, and holy joy would be found on earth. Should any one deny this, after perusing them attentively, it would prove nothing but the weakness of his understanding, or the depravity of his heart.

They require us to regard God with filial, and our fellow-creatures with fraternal affection. They require rulers to "be just, ruling in the fear of God;" and subjects to "lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty." They require the husband "to love the wife even as himself;" and the wife "to reverence her husband." They require parents to educate their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" and children to love, honor, and obey their parents. They require masters to treat their servants

with kindness; and servants to be submissive, diligent, and faithful. They require of all, temperance, contentment, and industry; and stigmatize, as worse than an infidel, him who neglects to provide for the necessities of his family.

They provide for the speedy termination of animosities and dissensions, by requiring us to forgive, and pray for our enemies whenever we pray for ourselves; and to make reparation to all whom we have injured, before we presume to appear with our offering in the presence of God. In a word, they teach us, "that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." These duties they require us to perform with constancy and perseverance, on penalty of incurring the everlasting displeasure of our Creator, and its dreadful consequences.

In addition to these instructions and precepts, the Scriptures furnish us the most instructive *examples:* examples, which most plainly and convincingly teach us both what we must shun, and what we are to pursue. On every rock, where immortal souls have been wrecked; at the entrance of every path which leads to danger; they show us some self-destroyed wretch, standing, like a pillar of salt, to warn succeeding travellers not to approach it; while at the gate and in the path of life, they place many divinely-instructed and infallible guides, who lead the way, beckon us to follow, and point us to the happy mansions in which it ends.

Knowing how powerfully we are influenced by the example of those with whom we associate, it introduces us to the society of the most amiable and excellent of our species; makes us perfectly acquainted with their characters and pursuits; admits us into, not only their closet, but their

hearts; unveils to us their secret springs of action; and shows us the hidden source whence they derived wisdom and strength to subdue their sinful propensities, and overcome the world. By opening this volume, we may at any time walk in the garden of Eden with Adam; sit in the ark with Noah; share the hospitality, or witness the faith of Abraham; ascend the mount of God with Moses; unite in the secret devotions of David; or listen to the eloquent and impassioned address of St. Paul. Nay, more: we may here converse with Him, who spake as never man spake; participate with the spirits of the just made perfect in the employments and happiness of heaven; and enjoy sweet communion with the Father of our spirits, through his Son Jesus Christ. Such is the society to which the Scriptures introduce us; such the examples which they present to our imitation; requiring us to follow them "who through faith and patience inherit the promises;" to walk in the steps of our divine Redeemer; and to be "followers of God, as dear children."

Nor does this precious volume contain merely instructions, precepts, examples, and threatenings. It contains also "*strong consolation;*" consolation, suited to every possible variety and complication of human wretchedness; and of sufficient efficacy to render the soul, not only resigned, but joyful, in the lowest depths of adversity; not only tranquil, but triumphant, in the very jaws of death. It is the appointed vehicle by which the Spirit of God, the promised Comforter, communicates not only his instructions, but his consolations to the soul. It is, if I may so express it, the body, which he has assumed, in order to converse with men; and he lives and speaks in every line. Hence it is said to be "quick," or living, "and powerful." Hence its words "are spirit, and they are life;" the living, life-giving words

of the living God. The consolation which it imparts, and the blessings which it offers, are such as nothing but omnipotent Goodness can bestow.

It finds us guilty, and freely offers us pardon. It find us polluted with innumerable defilements, and offers us moral purity. It finds us weak and enslaved, and offers us liberty. It finds us wretched, and offers happiness. It finds us dead, and offers everlasting life. It finds us "having no hope, and without God in the world"—with nothing before us but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation," and places glory and honor, and immortality, full in our view; and while it urges us to pursue them, by the exercise of faith in the Redeemer, and "patient continuance in well-doing," it encourages and animates us in the pursuit, by the most condescending offers of assistance, and by "exceedingly great and precious promises;" promises signed by the immutable God, and sealed with the blood of his eternal Son; promises which, one would think, are sufficient to render indolence active, and timidity bold. Unfailing pleasures; durable riches; immortal honors; imperishable mansions; an unfading crown; an immovable throne; an everlasting kingdom; an eternal weight of glory; perfect, uninterrupted, never-ending, perpetually increasing felicity, in the full fruition of God, are the rewards which these promises assure to all penitent believers. But in vain do we attempt to describe these rewards; for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Such are the circumstances which render the Bible interesting as a human composition; such the instructions, precepts, and promises, which it communicates, as a revela-

tion from God. In proportion also to the importance of its contents, are the evils which would result from its absence or loss. Destroy this volume, as the enemies of human happiness have vainly endeavored to do, and you render us profoundly ignorant of our Creator; of the formation of the world which we inhabit; of the origin and progenitors of our race; of our present duty and future destination; and consign us through life to the dominion of fancy, doubt, and conjecture. Destroy this volume, and you rob us of the consolatory expectation, excited by its predictions, that the stormy cloud, which has so long hung over a suffering world, will at length be scattered, and a brighter day succeed; you forbid us to hope that the hour is approaching, when "nation shall no more lift up sword against nation," and righteousness, peace, and holy joy shall universally prevail, and allow us to anticipate nothing but a constant succession of wars, revolutions, crimes, and miseries, terminating only with the end of time. Destroy this volume, and you deprive us, at a single blow, of religion, with all the animating consolations, hopes, and prospects which it affords, and leave us nothing but the liberty of choosing (miserable alternative!) between the cheerless gloom of infidelity and the monstrous shadows of paganism. Destroy this volume, and you unpeople heaven; bar for ever its doors against the wretched posterity of Adam; restore to the king of terrors his fatal sting; bury hope in the same grave which receives our bodies; consign all who have died before us, to eternal sleep or endless misery, and allow us to expect nothing at death, but a similar fate. In a word, destroy this volume, and you take from us at once, every thing which prevents existence from becoming of all curses the greatest. You blot out the sun, dry up the ocean, take away the atmosphere of

the moral world, and degrade man to a situation, from which he may look up with envy to "the brutes that perish."

Who, then, would not earnestly wish to believe the Scriptures, even though they came to him unattended with sufficient evidence of their Divine origin? Who can be so much his own enemy as to refuse to believe them, when they come attended with evidence more than sufficient to satisfy all but the wilfully incredulous? Who, in this view of them, imperfect as it is, is prepared to say, that they are not of all books the most important; that they ought not to be prized and studied, as such, by all who possess them; and put, without delay, into the hands of all who do not?

Were this inestimable treasure in the exclusive possession of any individual, would you not consider him as the most malevolent of beings, if he neglected to communicate it as soon as possible to his fellow-creatures? And if he were a stranger to the use of the press, would not the common feelings of humanity require him to spend whole nights, as did a wealthy merchant in the East, in transcribing it for their use? What possible excuse, then, can we assign for neglecting to distribute this treasure, when the press affords us the means of doing it at so trifling an expense?

Will it be said, that few or none of our fellow-citizens are destitute? Will it be said, that none are destitute of the sacred volume but in consequence of their own fault; and that they are, therefore, unworthy to receive such a gift? Admitting this to be the case, which in many instances, however, it is not, is this an excuse for neglecting them which it becomes *us* to assign? Had God adopted such a rule in the distribution of his favors—had he bestowed the Bible on none but the deserving, who among ourselves would ever have been favored with it?

Will it be said, that the other wants of the poor are so numerous and pressing, that nothing can be spared for the supply of this? But what other want can be so pressing, so deserving of immediate attention, as that of the Bible? In what other way can we, at an equal expense, do so much to alleviate the miseries, and promote, I will not say the eternal, but even the temporal happiness of the poor, as by putting into their hands a book which contains such a mass of the most valuable and important information; which is so eminently calculated to render them better, and, consequently, happier in all the relations of life; which teaches them, "in whatever state they are, therewith to be content," and to look for the relief of their necessities to Him, "who hears the young ravens when they cry;" and to whom they will never look in vain, while they take this precious volume for their guide.

Were they experimentally acquainted with the worth of this volume, they would themselves feel the want of it to be the first, the most pressing of wants. Send us any famine, they would cry, but "a famine of the word of God." Keep your wealth, enjoy your possessions; give us but the Bible, to smooth the path of life and the bed of death, and we will envy none of your possessions; but living, and dying, will bless you, though we should perish with hunger. Such is the language of the pious poor. Such, were it not for their vices or their ignorance, would be the language of all the poor; and who will deny that their vices and ignorance render it still more necessary that they should be put in immediate possession of the Bible?

Let us then bind it to our hearts, as our most valuable treasure; study it with that attention and reverence which its character demands, and submit implicitly to its decisions,

as to "the lively oracles of God." Thus we shall be impressed with a conviction far more strong and abiding than any external evidence can produce, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Thus shall we be enabled, by our own experience, to feel and adopt the language of the Psalmist: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey or the honey-comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."

I love the volumes of thy word:
What light and joy these leaves afford
To souls benighted and distress'd!
Thy precepts guide my doubtful way,
Thy fear forbids my feet to stray;
Thy promise leads my heart to rest.

From the discov'ries of thy law
The perfect rules of life I draw;
These are my study and delight:
Not honey so invites the taste,
Nor gold, that has the furnace pass'd,
Appears so pleasing to the sight.

Thy threat'nings wake my slumb'ring eyes,
And warn me where my danger lies;
But 'tis thy blessed Gospel, Lord,
That makes my guilty conscience clean,
Converts my soul, subdues my sin,
And gives a free, but large reward.

No. 72.

SIXTEEN

SHORT SERMONS.

I.

What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?—Matt. 16: 26.

How little attention does this infinitely important subject gain in the world! How few consider the salvation of their precious souls as the great business of life! You who are reading these lines, did you ever consider it? Did you ever lay it to heart, and are you acting accordingly? If this is the case, the following language will express your heart-felt convictions: "I have a soul as well as a body. My soul must live for ever in happiness or misery. It is capable of pain or pleasure inconceivably greater than my body. It is a matter of comparatively little importance whether I am in abject poverty or the greatest affluence, during the few years I am to continue in the present world; whether I am respected or despised by my fellow-mortals; whether my body is sickly or healthy, painful or at ease. These are matters of small consequence; death is certain, is near. 'Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust,' must soon be pronounced over my lifeless body. In a dying moment, if I could call the whole world my own, what good would it do me? What comfort could it afford me? But whether my soul is to be

eternally happy or miserable; the companion of angels and saints made perfect around the throne of God, or doomed to weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, with devils and damned spirits in hell, where the worm never dieth, and where the fire never will be quenched; this is the momentous inquiry I ought to make. To escape from the wrath to come, and secure an inheritance among the saints in light, ought to be my great concern. Is it so? Which world is most in my thoughts, this or the next? What am I most anxious about? Am I not often inquiring, what shall I eat, what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed? But when did I seriously inquire, 'What shall I do to be saved?' If I have no prevailing concern about my soul, I may be certain my state is bad, and its danger awfully great."

II.

Sin is the transgression of the law.—1 John, 3: 4.

Sinner, did you ever inquire what sin is? Did you ever study the word of God, that you might have proper views of this greatest of all evils? If you have never made the inquiry, your state is bad, dreadfully bad. Your salvation is at stake. Look seriously into the text. Lift up your heart to God, and say, "Lord, give me proper views of sin." "Sin is the transgression of the law." What law? The law of the most holy God. Where is this law to be found? It is contained in the ten commandments. Did I ever read them with a trembling heart and a faltering voice, asking, Have I transgressed this or that part of God's holy law? Did I ever consider that the law may be broken by thought, as well as by word or deed? Did I ever reflect that the law is spiritual, reaching to the thoughts, purposes, and intentions of the heart; that every irregular thought is a transgression of the law; that every unholy desire is sin; that "for every idle word that men speak, they must give account in the day of judgment," Matt. 12: 36; that awful day,

when the heart-searching God shall judge the secrets of our hearts? Alas, how many idle thoughts have passed through my mind, without the proper conviction attending each of them, that this is sin! See Gen. 6 : 5. How many idle words have I every day spoken, without reflecting, that for every one of these I must give an account! Matt. 12 : 36. When did the evil of my thoughts and words extort an anxious cry from my heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" If sin be the transgression of the law; that is, if falling short of the perfection which the law requires, in thought, word, or deed, be sin, as well as doing that which the law forbids; how much have I to answer for, that perhaps I never before thought of? Yet I have often confessed, "We have done what we ought not to have done, and have left undone what we ought to have done, and there is no health in us." Alas! I have mocked God, by confessing with my lips what I do not feel in my heart. Let my conscience, O Lord, now be awakened to feel what sin is.

III

All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.—Rom. 3 : 23.

"All," and therefore you, my dear reader, and myself. We have sinned: that is, we have broken God's law; for "there is none righteous, no, not one." Rom. 3 : 10. There is none that has kept the law of God. We have transgressed *every* precept of his moral law, either in act, word, or evil desire. The charge is heavy, but the verdict is true. Let us consider the case, earnestly entreating God to enlighten our minds. Take the ten commandments into your hand, and read. We have broken the *first* commandment, by trusting in and loving other things more than God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Matt. 22 : 37. In this we have come short. The *second* respects the manner in which God is to be worshipped, not with outward form and ceremony, but in spirit and in truth. Alas, how deficient have we been in that serious attention, that inward

reverence, and that devout affection which his worship required! God is a jealous God. You say you have never been guilty of profane cursing and swearing, and so think you have kept the *third;* but have you never in prayer, and in reading the sacred Scriptures, suffered the holy name of God to pass through your lips without an awful sense of what you were doing, or even without thought? "God will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Have you always employed the whole Sabbath in those religious exercises which the *fourth* commandment enjoins; and performed those exercises in such a devout manner, that the law has nothing to charge you with, in thought, word, or deed? Sinner, lay your hand upon your mouth, and plead guilty. Need I go through the second table? Dost thou love thy neighbor as thyself? Hast thou done unto all men as thou wouldst they should do unto thee? Have you never been guilty of disobedience to your parents? Know you not that every rising of causeless anger is murder? Matt. 5: 22. That every unchaste desire is adultery? Matt. 5: 28. That every secret fraud and neglect of affording that succor to the poor which is in your power, is theft? That every uncharitable thought is a breach of the *ninth,* and every covetous wish a transgression of the *tenth* commandment? Surely all have sinned, in doing that which the law forbids, and in not doing that which the law commands. What have I then done; and what have I not done? All have sinned. What is my state? A state of sinfulness and misery. Why have I not felt it till now? Because sin hath blinded my eyes against the light of truth.

IV.

Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.—Gal. 3: 10.

What means that awful word, "*Cursed?*" The curse of God is the declaration of his just anger and wrath against sin and the sinner. Who can stand in his sight, if he is

angry? Psalm 76: 7. But who is cursed? Every one, whether young or old, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, that continueth not, throughout the whole period of life, without any intermission, failure, or defect whatever, in all things, in thought, word, and deed, doing perfectly what the law requires, and keeping himself absolutely free from what the law condemns, *in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them:* the law being understood in its spiritual and most exalted sense and interpretation. And remember that it is further said, James 2: 10, that whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. Now consider, has there been a day, an hour, a moment, in which your state has been such as the law requires? The curse is pronounced on every transgressor for every transgression: not only for profaneness, murder, adultery, and such like gross acts of sin; but for every sinful thought, and for every moment in which you have failed to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. O how many curses, then, has the law denounced against you and me! It has been revealing the wrath of God against us every moment of our lives; for every moment of our lives we have been sinning against God. Are these things so? Can you from Scripture prove them to be false? What! is every sinner cursed for every sin, and have I been perpetually sinning all my life? Is it true that I have never, from a sincere regard to God, made conscience of one thought, word, or action; never performed one duty, or abstained from one sin, from a right motive, love to God? Has my whole life been one uninterrupted course of evil? Is my state, then, a state of condemnation? How astonishing it is! What a proof of the darkness of my mind and the hardness of my heart, that I can live one hour at ease under the curse of God; that I can lie down or rise up without trembling, since the curse of God must plunge the impenitent sinner into hell!

V.

The wages of sin is death.—Rom. 6 : 23.

Sin is the transgression of the law, 1 John, 3 : 4, that eternal rule of right to rational beings, the moral law of God. It is sin, all sin, every sin, that is here spoken of. Death, whatever that word means, is the just and certain reward of every sin committed in thought, word, or deed. But what is death? The death of the body is its separation from the soul. You are a sinner; and this effect of sin you have begun to feel in all those pains and sicknesses which are bringing your body to the grave. You are now a dying man. The death of the body, or its separation from the soul, will occasion its return to the dust from which it was taken. But death in the text means vastly more: *the death of the soul.* What is that? It is something as much more dreadful than that of the body, as the soul is of more value than the body. It is the separation of the soul from God, as its life and happiness: hence, it becomes a state of unavoidable sin, and first or last, a state of self-tormenting anguish, arising from the forfeiture of the friendship of God, with all its attendant blessings. Spiritual death, or the death of the soul, consists not in the loss of consciousness or feeling, but in the loss of the image and favor of God. For in his favor is life, Psalm 30 : 5; and in his frown is death. If you, my dear fellow-sinner, are not made alive by God's converting grace, this is your state. You are dead in trespasses and sins; and unless you are quickened by God's Spirit, communicated to you before your departure hence, in this unhappy state you must for ever continue; for the death spoken of in the text, is opposed to eternal life in the following clause. And oh, if the effect of this spiritual death be misery, even in this present life—as the experience of every man testifies, if he will own the truth—then what must it be in the world to come? Ah! who can tell? We read of a worm that never dies, to prey on the tormented

conscience ; of fire that never can be quenched, to destroy both body and soul in hell ; of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth ; and all this is to last for ever. But is there not a disproportion between the offence and punishment ? Let God be true, and every man a liar. He says the wages, the just reward of sin, is death. God's truth binds him to fulfil his threatenings, as well as his promises. O fly from the wrath to come ; for "who among us can dwell with devouring fire ? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings ?" Isaiah 33 : 14.

VI.

What must I do to be saved ?—Acts 16 : 30.

This is the anxious inquiry of an awakened sinner. By an awakened sinner, I mean the man who knows what sin is, and who painfully feels that he is a sinner, and as such, under the curse of God, and in danger of hell fire. Are you an awakened sinner ? Alas ! all men are naturally asleep, and insensible of their danger ; and so they continue till they are roused out of their carnal slumbers by the word and Spirit of God. They cry peace, peace, to themselves, when there is no peace ; for God hath said, "There is no peace to the wicked." Isa. 48 : 22. They live on, day after day, keeping death, judgment, and eternity, out of their thoughts ; never reading the Bible with a sincere desire to know what their state is, and never praying to God from the bottom of their hearts, "God be merciful to me a sinner." If you can live without earnest prayer to God for mercy, habitually neglecting it, you give as full proof that you are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in you, as if you were living in the grossest immoralities. But when it pleases God to fasten conviction on the heart of a man, and to awaken his conscience, then he starts up as one out of sleep. He sees, what he never discovered before, that it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God.

He reads in the word of truth, that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God; and trembles as he reads. Psalm 9 : 17. He acknowledges, "I have forgotten God and sinned against him;" and being convinced that the wages of sin is death, he asks, How shall I escape the damnation of hell? Such a man is deeply in earnest when he makes the inquiry, What must I do to be saved? He feels that his all for eternity is at stake. The world with all its pleasures, profits, and honors, becomes tasteless and insipid; it cannot give ease to his aching heart, nor heal his wounded conscience. He now begins to pray. His prayer is now the real language of his heart, not the formal, unmeaning service it was before. A sense of his danger drives him to the throne of grace. The word of God he now reads as the decision of eternal truth; and he reads it as having an interest in every line. Sinner, has this inquiry ever been yours, "What must I do to be saved?"

VII.

Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.—Mark 1 : 15.

These are the words of our blessed Saviour, addressed to poor guilty sinners like you and me. But what is repentance? It is the work of the Spirit of God upon the heart, producing such an inward sense of the evil and guilt of sin, as makes a man wonder that he is out of hell; such a hatred of sin as causes a man to forsake it; and such an apprehension of the consequences of sin, as makes a man willing to be saved wholly and solely through what Jesus Christ has done and suffered for lost souls. The penitent sinner is convinced that sin deserves punishment; that he himself, as a sinner, is liable to the wrath of God; that sin must be pardoned or punished; that he can make no amends for the least of his transgressions; and consequently, that his salvation must be all of grace. The man thus humbled, is prepared to welcome the news of a Saviour who came

to seek and to save that which was lost. Matt. 18 : 11. Such is the Gospel. It is glad tidings to a lost, guilty world. The sum and substance of it is this, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. 1 : 15. He died to make satisfaction for their sins: and being God and man in one Saviour, "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Heb. 7 : 25. His blood being the blood of God incarnate, Acts 20 : 28, was infinitely meritorious; and it was shed for this very purpose, to take away sin; so that if your sins, poor self-condemned sinner, are more in number than the hairs of your head, or the sand on the sea-shore; if they are great and aggravated, and red like scarlet, yet there is hope. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth"—hath virtue to cleanse—"from all sin." 1 John, 1 : 7. But how am I to become interested in this, and get the comfort of it? "Believe the Gospel:" rely on what the word of God says about Jesus Christ, and his willingness and power to save sinners. But may I without presumption believe that Jesus Christ came to save such a wretch as I am? Yes, "this is God's commandment, that ye believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John, 3 : 23. There can be no presumption in doing what God has commanded, and taking God at his word.

VIII.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.—1 Tim. 1 : 15.

This is the sum of the Gospel. Jesus Christ is God: he made the world, and all that therein is, Col 1 : 16; but we his creatures broke his laws, and rebelled against him. He might justly have cast us all into hell, the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. But, O wondrous love! "God was manifest in the flesh:" was born into the world. For what purpose? *To save sinners.* How did he save them? By dying for them upon the cross, "bearing their sins in his own

body upon the tree," and washing them from their sins in his own blood. Did I ever consider this wonderful love of God? I am a sinner, born in sin, and as such liable to eternal punishment. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," even such as I am. Have I ever earnestly entreated him to save me? Do I believe that I am a miserable sinner? Do I feel it, and lament it? And am I sensible, that unless Christ saves me, I must be a damned soul for ever? Alas, how many never go to Jesus Christ to save them! How many are careless and unconcerned about what Jesus Christ has done for sinners! But do I lay it to heart? Are all my hopes built upon this faithful saying, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners?" O what a comfortable saying it is, that though I am a sinner, the chief of sinners, yet I may be saved from the sins I have committed, and the hell I have deserved, if, under a penitential sense of my wickedness, I look up to Jesus Christ, and trust in him! O may the Holy Spirit enable me thus to look unto Jesus. Oh, what should I, a poor, wretched, helpless sinner do, if there were no Jesus to save me? How eagerly should I welcome such glad tidings! Surely, the message is "worthy of all acceptation," and ought to be received by all, since all have sinned, and stand in need of being saved; and since all who feel their lost estate may come to HIM who is able to save them. O Lord, the Holy Ghost, enable me to believe to the saving of my soul.

IX.

Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.—JOHN 6: 37.

How tenderly compassionate is the dear friend of poor lost sinners! How anxious does he appear to remove every objection out of the way of the inquiring soul, that is made willing to be saved on Gospel terms, "by grace through faith!" Eph. 2: 8. Lest such should be discouraged, how graciously does he describe their character and feelings,

inviting them, with all the eloquence of Godlike piety, to come unto him! Hear his words, Matt. 11 : 28 : "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Are you weary of the slavery of sin, and the bondage of Satan and the world? Are you heavy laden with guilt on your conscience, and fear in your heart? Behold, the loving Saviour stands with open arms to receive you; and these are the gracious words which proceed out of his mouth: "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." "He is faithful that hath promised, and cannot deceive you." Heb. 10 : 23. "He will not alter the thing that is gone out of his lips." Psalm 89 : 34. Make the experiment; come to him. He is able to save, and he is willing to save; wherefore should you doubt?

But you say, "I am a great sinner." Be it known unto you, that Jesus Christ is an Almighty Saviour. You say further, "I have continued long in open rebellion against him; I have been many years sinning against him with a high hand." Be it so; you are not out of the reach of mercy, nor is your case too desperate for the skill and power of the great Physician. Do you still object, "I am a sinner of no common kind; of sinners I am chief." Even unto you is the word of this salvation sent. The blood of Jesus is the blood of God, Acts 20 : 28, and therefore "cleanseth from all sin." 1 John, 1 : 7. The righteousness of Jesus is the righteousness of God, Rom. 3 : 23, and therefore is sufficient to justify the most ungodly. Do not despair; for thus saith thy Saviour, the lover of thy poor lost soul, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." He makes no exceptions; being "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3 : 9.

But you say, "Must I not mend my heart and reform my life before I venture to approach him?" If you wait till you have effected this in your own strength, you will after all die in your sins. This he must do for you; and this he will effectually do for you, when you come to his cross, confess-

ing your sins, and trusting in his blood as your atonement. You must come to him just as you are, a poor, vile sinner, to be washed in his blood, to be clothed in his righteousness, sanctified by his Spirit, and fitted for his glory. Why do you object to receive what he is so ready to give; and that freely, "without money and without price," Isa. 55: 1, even pardon, holiness, and heaven? He professedly receiveth sinners, Luke 15: 2, that he may save them; and has solemnly declared, *him that cometh unto me*, be the person who or what he may, *I will in no wise cast out.*

X.

Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.—Rom. 5: 1.

"There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked!" Isa. 48: 22. An unpardoned sinner can have no peace with God. While his conscience is unawakened, he may be careless and secure; but as soon as his eyes are opened, and his heart is made to feel, he must be miserable, till God speaks peace to his guilty soul. To be justified, is to be pardoned and accepted of God. Pardon and acceptance are only to be obtained by faith in Jesus Christ, as having atoned for sin by his precious blood. When it is given me to believe that Jesus Christ hath taken away my sins, there is nothing more to distress my conscience; then I have peace with God. The distress of an awakened soul arises from a guilty conscience, and a sense of his sins. As soon therefore as the poor, trembling sinner discovers, that Christ died for such as he is; that Christ, being God, is able to save the chief of sinners; that this was his errand into the world, and that he hath said, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," John 6: 37: as soon as the poor sinner believes this, he hath peace with God; he can call God his Father; he can trust God for every thing; he can think of death with comfort, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Sinner is

this your state? Do you know that there is no salvation without an interest in Christ? that there is no peace with God but through Jesus Christ? that unless your sins be pardoned, your life must be unhappy, and your death the entrance of eternal misery? If I am looking unto Jesus as the only Saviour, and in self-despair have fled to him for refuge, then God is no longer angry with me; my sins, which are many, are forgiven; my person is accepted; and if I die to-night, I shall go to God. O, happy state, to have nothing to fear in life or death! to have God for our Father, Christ for our Redeemer, the Holy Ghost for our Comforter, death our friend, heaven our home, and a happy eternity before us of peace and joy! Sinner, is this thy case?

XI.

Unto you which believe, He is precious.—1 Pet. 2: 7.

The Apostle is speaking of Jesus Christ, the dear dying friend of poor lost sinners, who pitied us when we had no pity on ourselves; and died for us when otherwise we must have been cast into hell. Now, if you believe this, that your sins would have damned you if Christ had not taken them on himself; and that you must have been cursed for ever, if Christ had not been made a curse for you: if you feel in your hearts a humble assurance of pardon purchased by his blood; and if you can consider him as saying to you in the Gospel, what he said to the poor sinful woman, Luke 7: 48, 50, "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven;" then Christ is precious to you; you love him above all things. You love to think of him, you love to hear of him, you love to talk of him; whatever he has commanded, you desire to do; and what he has forbidden, you will not willingly do, to gain the whole world. You are now become a new creature. You cannot live as you once lived. You are born again. Old things are passed away, and all things are become new. 2 Cor. 5: 17. The things which you once hated, such as

prayer, praise, hearing and reading God's word, you now love; and the things you once loved, such as vain, sinful conversation, and trifling amusements, you now hate. You cannot now go to bed at night without thanking your precious and adorable Jesus for the mercies of the day; nor without committing yourself to his protection for the night, and trusting your soul in his hands, that if you die before morning, he may receive you unto himself: and when you rise in the morning, you cannot go out into the world about your lawful business, without begging him to keep you from the snares of the world and the temptations of Satan. Your one object is to please your beloved Saviour, and above all things you fear to offend him. You desire, that "whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, you may do all to the glory of God." 1 Cor. 10: 31. "The love of Christ constrains you." 2 Cor. 5: 14.

XII.

Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.—Heb. 12: 14.

God is a holy God: Christ is a holy Saviour: the Spirit of God is a holy Spirit: heaven is a holy place: the angels are holy angels: and all God's redeemed people are a holy people. Am I a holy person? If I am not, the Scriptures assure me that I shall not, cannot, see God. Holiness is a separation of heart from sin to God. It is not mere decency of conduct; there may be external morality where there is no holiness, though there can be no holiness without morality. If you are a holy person, you not only abstain from sin, but you really hate it. You hate all sin; whatever is not consistent with the will of God, you hate and abhor. Your abhorrence is turned against yourself on account of your remaining sinfulness. You not only discover sin in your life, but in your heart. If you are a sanctified person, you make conscience not only of your actions and words, but of your thoughts. You not only desire to appear good

in the eyes of the world, but to approve yourself to God who searcheth the heart. You seek an inward conformity to the mind and will of God. Is this the case? Remember that it is written, *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* Holiness is, in short, the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us. This love becomes the *motive* to all holy obedience; the word of God then becomes the *rule* of the whole conduct; and the glory of God is proposed as the *end* of our conversation. Now, no man can enter heaven till he is made holy. Do you believe it? And is it the prayer of your heart, "Lord, sanctify me wholly, soul, body, and spirit?" If it be, the Lord hath begun the good work in your heart, and he will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ, that you may be presented holy and unblamable before him in love.

XIII.

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.—TITUS 2: 13.

THIS is the happy privilege of the believer in Jesus, to be looking for the second appearance of his Lord. Jesus has promised that he will come again; that he will "come quickly." Rev. 22: 20. He has declared that his coming will be sudden, like that of "a thief in the night." 1 Thess. 5: 2. The believer is a man who is expecting it, waiting for it, and preparing to welcome it. He knows that though "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;" yet that another end of his coming is, that he may "be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe." 2 Thess. 1: 7–10. Therefore he looks for that blessed hope. He has peace with God through Jesus Christ.

Guilt, the cause of fear, is taken away. He believes that the Judge is his friend, therefore he looks forward with a comfortable expectation. He feels that his present state is not his rest; for though the guilt of sin is taken out of his conscience, and the love and power of it out of his heart, he painfully feels that sin yet dwelleth in him; and therefore longs for the coming of Christ, that he may totally destroy it. The hope he has, is a blessed hope, because the things hoped for are inestimable in value, eternal in duration, and certain to the man who looks for them in faith and hope. "We that are in this tabernacle" of flesh and blood, "do groan, being burdened," 2 Cor. 5 : 4, with sin, affliction, and temptation; but at the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." Rev. 21 : 4.

XIV.

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?—Luke 11 : 13.

In these words, our gracious Father who is in heaven permits us to decide an important point by the conviction of our own consciences. He appeals to our feelings as parents, in order to encourage our hope and enliven our confidence, ver. 11 : "If a son ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?" If a hungry child come to a father, saying, "Father, I am starving for want, give me bread to eat;" would the father, unless he were worse than a brute, give his child a stone, to mock him? "Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? Or if he ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion," to destroy him? Certainly not. "How much more, then, shall your heavenly Father," whose affection for his poor sinful children is so

infinitely superior to yours for the offspring of your bodies, "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

I am a poor ignorant sinner. I want to know myself as a sinner before God, and as exposed to his just indignation. I want to know Jesus Christ as a Saviour to my poor soul; for to know him is life eternal. But this saving knowledge I can only derive from divine teaching. God has promised his Holy Spirit, to lead the poor ignorant sinner that feels his ignorance—for that is the point—into all truth necessary for his comfort and salvation. O Lord, let thy Holy Spirit be my teacher.

I am a poor, *helpless* sinner. I have no heart to believe on the Son of God. Yet faith in him is essential to salvation. My conscience is distressed on account of my sins. I want to "know him and the power of his resurrection." God has promised his Holy Spirit, to work faith in the heart of every humble supplicant. O Lord, help me to believe, to the peace of my conscience, the joy of my heart, the sanctification of my nature, the salvation of my soul, and the eternal glory of thy name.

God giveth his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. We can do no good, we can do nothing but sin, and so destroy ourselves, without his special assistance. Do you feel you want it? And do want and absolute necessity drive you to a throne of grace for this comprehensive blessing? Do you ask as a hungry child asks his father for bread? Are you sensible of your ignorance, so as earnestly to seek his divine teaching; and of your helpless state, so as to ask help of God? "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Consider, God cannot break his word. If you have asked without receiving, it is because you did not ask in earnest. You do not feel your want. Ask of God to give you to feel your wants, and then he will supply them; ask him to teach you to pray. Come to him as a poor, ignorant, helpless child; for "Except ye be converted, and become as little children,

ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 18 : 3. Lord, give unto us this childlike spirit.

XV.

It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.—Heb. 12 : 27.

You and I are dying men. We have seen many of our friends and relatives laid in the grave; many as young as ourselves, and apparently as likely to live. Some we have seen carried off by long and lingering diseases, and some cut down suddenly without warning. God only knows when we are to follow them into the eternal world. "We know not the day of our death." "Our times are in God's hand." It may be to-night. We are certain the moment of death must come. We are certain it can be at no great distance; but we know not how near. Now, if these things are true, what madness it is to put off the necessary work of repentance to a future day! We are not certain of seeing to-morrow; and as repentance is "the gift of God," if we neglect to ask for it to-day, and refuse to hear his warning voice, he may say to us, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you, then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." Prov. 1 : 24–29.

After death comes the judgment. We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to give account of the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad. Who must appear there? All, young and old, rich and poor, without distinction or exception. You and I must

meet there. But for what purpose? To give an account of what? Of all our secret thoughts, known only to ourselves; of all our secret actions, which no eye saw but the all-seeing eye of the omniscient Judge. He keeps a book of remembrance, in which every evil thought, word, and work is registered; every one of which will be then brought forth, to our eternal confusion, unless they are washed away in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We read, Rev. 6: 16, that some, in that day, will call to the rocks and the mountains, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." God grant it may not be your case, or mine. But in order to avoid this dreadful state, we must "seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near; the wicked must forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon." This is the day of grace. But it will be too late to seek for mercy when the day of judgment comes. If you die without an interest in Christ, it had been good for you if you had never been born; for it would be better to have had no existence at all, than have a miserable existence in hell for ever. This must be the portion of every unpardoned, unconverted sinner. God hath said it, who cannot lie.

XVI.

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?—Heb. 2: 3.

A salvation great indeed, beyond description or conception, contrived by the wisdom and love of God for my poor, lost soul! A salvation procured by the death of the only begotten Son of God. How near was I to the brink of hell! How deeply was I fallen! How many and great my sins, to make such a salvation necessary! How dangerous must it be to neglect it! God has no other Son to give. If you are unconcerned about it; if you take no pains to secure it;

if you are unaffected with your danger and with the salvation that is proposed to you; how can you escape? It is impossible. You reject the only Saviour, and therefore commit the greatest sin: you spurn God's free mercy in Christ. Are you not shocked at such a thought? Be assured that every careless sinner is guilty of this. There is no relief provided for those who finally reject Christ. "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." Their ruin is certain, is near, and will be eternal and intolerable. Remember, this is the accepted time, this the day of salvation. 2 Cor. 6: 2. If you die without Christ, you can never see the face of God with comfort. You must hear the Judge pronounce your sentence, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matt. 25: 41. God forbid. Once more I entreat you, my fellow-sinner, before you close the book, stop and think. Nay, go upon your knees, and pray to God to awaken your conscience, and give you the knowledge of Christ. My poor prayers are offered up for your salvation. I have no motive in putting this into your hands but your eternal good. "O God, may this little book be productive of good to the reader's soul, in time and eternity. Follow it with thy blessing, and may thy precious truths, therein set forth, be 'the savor of life unto life; and not of death unto death.' Grant it, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."